

TRANSATLANTIC CENTRAL EUROPE



Jessie Labov

Contesting Geography
and Redefining Culture
beyond the Nation

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Transatlantic Central Europe

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beyond the Nation

JESSIE LABOV



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For Ladislav Matejka
(1919–2012)

and

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(1943–2014)

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Movements of Texts across Borders

The phrase “Central Europe” gains a deeper and more complex meaning the farther it travels away from Central Europe itself. With distance, it transforms from a matter of specific borders and capital cities to a vigorous construction of identity and belonging, one which took place most recently in the 1980s, during a dynamic interchange between those in the region and those in emigration. In the wider, geopolitical context it has also come to represent a struggle for freedom of expression, free exchange of ideas, and a liberal humanist heritage that is in danger of being completely lost today. When obstacles arose to that free exchange of ideas—and all that it came to signify—Central Europeans at home and abroad found creative ways to circumvent them; this, too, became part of the legacy of the concept, and by extension the legacy of the opposition movements in Central Europe during the Cold War. The larger constellation of meanings, practices, politics, and geographies generated by Central Europeans engaged in this debate over the long twentieth century is what I call “Transatlantic Central Europe,” and the main object of study of the first part of this book. The second part looks more broadly at the strategies that émigré groups and opposition movements have used (and are using) to redefine a shared national/cultural identity as imposed by the state, and to challenge existing geographical concepts that limit that identity.

The point of departure for Part One, “*Cross Currents and Its Transatlantic Central European Imaginary*,” therefore, is the concept of Central Europe as it came to be understood towards the end of the Cold War, particularly in Western Europe and the United States. This instance of

Central Europe as a distinct cultural region first took shape in the writings and lectures of intellectuals in political exile or emigration from countries such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania; in their essays from the late 1970s and early 1980s, the cultural legacy of Central Europe is described in direct opposition to the concept of Eastern Europe—a part of a larger anti-Soviet sentiment. It stands in strong contrast to the nineteenth-century, pan-Germanic notion of “Mitteleuropa” as well. By the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the Soviet Union was in the process of dissolution, and the discussion of Central Europe shifted from the East to the South, with a challenge: are the ethnic divisions in the Balkans also a part of Central European cultural heritage? Does the region between Russia and Germany, between the Baltic and the Black Seas, constitute a viable and stable cultural entity or was this simply wishful thinking on the part of nostalgic and idealistic writers living at a physical and temporal distance? Czesław Miłosz describes a historically Latinate Central Europe in his essay “Looking for a Center,” invoking “Rome-centered Christendom” as its earliest incarnation. What prevents this vision from being just another predetermined story about the clash of civilizations between a Byzantine East and a Catholic-Protestant West is that Miłosz’s center is restless and shifting—which is why he must look for it in the first place. Miłosz understands that just like borders, populations, and even geographic features, *centers can move*. Geography, therefore, is not anything like a science in this movement, but rather a canvas on which to paint one’s cultural and intellectual genealogy, in the manner of Impressionists, Symbolists, Cubists, Surrealists, or whichever artistic model best fits the writer’s sensibility. Contesting geography is what leads these thinkers to redefine culture.

The next question about Transatlantic Central Europe that this book addresses is the relationship between form and content: how did the means of expression of this concept contribute to its shape and contours? What are the generic conventions and material conditions that embed it in a larger literary and social context? In order to concentrate these lines of inquiry, I focus on the journal *Cross Currents: A Yearbook of Central European Culture*, which ran from 1982 through 1994, as both a microcosm and frame for Transatlantic Central Europe. Building on *Cross Currents*

as an exemplary format, I construct a historical context for the form of the political-cultural journal, and the reasons for publishing one in emigration (a tendency shared by émigrés globally throughout the long twentieth century). Another key mode of writing which permeates Central Europeanness is the tradition of the essay, as the political and aesthetic impact of these journals was largely organized around foundational essays, published and reprinted in a variety of venues. This brings us to the door of the Enlightenment *philosophes*, and yet another organizing principle for the Central European movement: the *Encyclopédie*. *Cross Currents* can also be read as an analog of the Encyclopedists' project to catalog and thereby circumscribe all forms of culture according to scientific principle. There are deep implications of this model for the Central European writers rooted in both East and West during the Cold War, as they travel from an intellectual world ruled by dialectical materialism to one wrestling with structuralism, poststructuralism, and radical challenges to positivist thinking.

Every article in *Cross Currents*—in fact, every rubric—seems to celebrate the diversity and differences between the various languages and literatures of Central Europe. The more tangled the ethnicities of a region, the richer an example of what it means to be Central European. One coherent trope which evidently coexisted with many of the diverse nationalities and languages of the region is Jewish identity. Among the essays and articles of the first several volumes of *Cross Currents*, Jewish writers, Jewish artifacts, and other remainders or the traces of Jewish civilization symbolize both the diversity of the region and its shared heritage. In charting the course of the journal over its twelve volumes, there is a decided shift from this one index of unity-in-diversity to another: Yugoslavism. In the mid to late 1990s, soon after *Cross Currents* ceased publication, the term “Central Europe” reached a peak of popularity, and started to decline in English-language usage.¹ While there are still occasional uses of it today, often in association with tourism or specific

¹ One simple and relatively reliable indicator of this is the Google Ngram Viewer, which documents a steady increase in uses of the term after 1980, with the peak usage in 1999 before a decline. Keeping in mind that this result is based on a full-text search of a large selection of English-language *books*, which take a year or two to reach

institutions, it carries little of the charge that it did in the 1980s and early 1990s, and Central Europe as a political and intellectual project has receded from the horizon. There is a convincing parallel in the 1990s between the gradual decline of this term, the collapse of the movement to “reinvent” Central Europe, and the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Retrospectively, we can see in the last four or five issues of *Cross Currents*, and in the circulating texts which make up Transatlantic Central Europe, a growing disillusionment with the role of the writer in politics, in part because of the role certain ex-Yugoslav writers played in inciting nationalist sentiment. Their actions further problematize the identity of a Central European writer whose words take on a political meaning—with or without his or her consent. The first half of the book ends with vexed questions about how the liberal discourse that politicized Transatlantic Central Europe in the 1990s will survive in the postsocialist period.

Part Two, “Further Essays in Contesting Geography and Redefining Culture,” extrapolates the temporal, spatial, and medial scope of the book to include periods before and after the Cold War, transgressions of new, postsocialist borders, and the translatability of these concepts into the Internet era. Methodologically, it moves beyond literary criticism and intellectual history to introduce space as the organizing principle, specifically the question of how we might “see” new paradigms when we adjust our gaze from the textual to the meta-textual, or from a unique act of smuggling a text across a border to the entire practice of disseminating, amplifying, distorting, and reproducing meaning in a global system. The term “essay” in the title of Part Two represents the strongest link between the two halves of the book, as these further case studies and methodological experiments are attempts (*essais*) to reimagine the relationship between the writer, the nation, and the world beyond those borders without relying on the East–West binary of the Cold War. The book then concludes with a series of episodes from post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe, in which we learn about how the same liberal humanist dis-

publication, we might put the peak usage in popular press and journals in 1996–1997. See <https://books.google.com/ngrams>.

courses from the 1980s are deployed in postsocialist environments of soft censorship, such as Serbia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

The unifying feature of all of these directions of inquiry, spinning out from the Center of Europe into comparative literary studies, history, geography, and media studies, is the movement of texts across borders. In addition to the primary sources mentioned above, there are several major critical works that have informed and shaped this study, either as paradigm shifts in our understanding of the region, or as methodological innovations in how to track and interpret transnational exchange. Two foundational texts are discussed extensively in Chapter Two, Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994) and Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* (1994); additionally, I have drawn heavily on the work of Jonathan Bolton (2012) to better understand the underground milieu from which many Central European intellectuals emerged, Marci Shore for a deeper grasp of the intellectual *longue durée*, and Friederike Kind-Kovács's comprehensive treatment of *tamizdat* institutions and their role in cross-border publishing (2002, 2014).

The last few years have been particularly rich in generating groundbreaking reconceptualizations of "Eastern Europe" in light of postcolonial and transnational studies, as evidenced in Anita Starosta's *Form and Instability: Eastern Europe, Literature, Postimperial Difference* (2015), George Gasyna's *Polish, Hybrid, and Otherwise* (2011), and Aniko Imre's *Identity Games* (2009). These books, together with Jonathan Schell's *The Unconquerable World* (2004), stand behind my conceptualization of Transatlantic Central Europe, and are its intended interlocutors. Other scholars I hope to engage can be found in the rapidly expanding, interdisciplinary field of periodical studies. In the decade since Sean Latham and Robert Scholes's high-profile delineation of this area of study in a 2006 *PMLA* article, there has been a marked proliferation of innovative projects that have recast how we think about the periodical as a literary and historical source.² Digitization and the digital humanities have played a

² See, for example, Philpotts (2012), Ardis (2012), Ardis and Collier (2008); the twin special issues of *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 3.2 (2012) and *Modernism/Modernity* 19.3 (Fall 2012); the Project for the Study of Dissidence and Samizdat (<http://samizdatcollections.library.utoronto.ca>); the Modernist Journal Project (<http://>

key role in this wave of scholarship, and in the present study I wish to demonstrate how we might juxtapose more traditional forms of literary history with quantitative approaches to see the periodical in new ways.

Part I: *Cross Currents* and Its Transatlantic Central European Imaginary

In Chapter One, I isolate the particular features of the “political-cultural journal” in a case study of the journal *Cross Currents*. Drawing from an extensive interview with the late Ladislav Matejka, the primary editor of *Cross Currents*, I present details about its founding, its funding, and some of its more explicit reasons for existence.³ The journal differs from other Cold War–era publications (such as *Encounter*, *Dissent*, or *The New Criterion*, to name a few), in that it was not political enough to qualify for funding through the Congress for Cultural Freedom, or some other ideologically charged source. Chapter One further explores this question of audience: if the articles in *Cross Currents* were not written by those outside of the Eastern Bloc in an attempt to influence the culture and politics inside, then who was its intended audience? The multinational character of the journal sets it apart from many other diaspora publications that speak to emigrant populations in their native language. The authors and subjects of *Cross Currents* are positioned as transatlantic public intellectuals, addressing the English-speaking world directly, or with the help of a translator; at the same time, they have not lost all ties to nationality. Each author (or subject) selected represents the country, ethnicity, religion, and/or language of origin in a kind of “Central European canon.” Authors more typically associated with other traditions, such as Rilke or Freud or Kafka, are reclaimed (or reinvented) as Central European. This is not unlike the practice of forming any canon—writers and artists who lived life on the margins of mainstream existence,

modjourn.org); and the Blue Mountain Project (<http://bluemountain.princeton.edu/index.html>).

³ Page numbers correspond to the transcript of the interview, conducted in February 2000, which can be found in Appendix A of my doctoral thesis (Labov 2004).

sometimes even outside of the state itself, are often reclaimed by canon-makers in order to represent a national culture to the world. In this case, however, the self-representation of the core group of writers as Central European is voluntary, as they associate the concept with larger political (anti-Soviet) and aesthetic (Enlightenment-based humanism, multiethnic coexistence) ideals.

This leads to a question inspired by Edward Said about the conditions under which a writer takes on the burden of representing a larger cause. Maintaining the focus on form, I use Adorno's famous writing on the "Essay as Form" to ask whether the Central Europeanists are continuing with the Enlightenment project or subverting some of its basic assumptions. By challenging the relationship between the writing subject and the scientific properties of his or her "weighing" or "testing" (the origin of the word *essai* itself), Adorno describes a new relationship between the essay and historical understanding: "This is why the essay refuses to be intimidated by the depraved profundity according to which truth and history are incompatible and opposed to one another. . . . The relationship to experience . . . is the relationship to all history. Hence the essay challenges the notion that what has been produced historically is not a fit object of theory" (1991, 10).

The Central European figure who most willfully occupies the role of essayist prescribed by Adorno is Danilo Kiš. Kiš is painfully aware of the double bind of being a writer from a politicized part of the world who has no choice but to speak a political language; at the same time, he is flattened by this language, and by the *reductionism* of the identity it imposes on the writer: "The writer of Central Europe has stood for a long time between two kinds of reductionism: ideological and nationalistic. After a long period of temptation, he will understand that he cannot find the ideals of the 'open society' in either one sphere or the other that constitute the only choice open to him. He will ultimately discover his only legitimacy in language and in literature, that 'strange and mysterious consolation' Kafka speaks of" (1986, 13). This statement seems to signal a retreat from the political sphere, or rather a displacement of the impulse to act politically into a purely aesthetic mode; neither Adorno nor Kiš would agree to such a strict delineation. Continuing with the historicized

context, the following chapters show other isolated figures negotiating between the task of representing a culture and providing a space in which artists and writers can feel an aesthetic freedom to experiment—in other words, *to create a culture* in emigration.

Chapter Two charts the intellectual history of the concept of Central Europe from its earliest, imperial disguises in medieval times to its dissolution in the mid-1990s, I argue, in response to the collapse of Yugoslavia. Larry Wolff's work on the invention of the concept of Eastern Europe during the Enlightenment era (by the West and for the West), is both a part of this trajectory and a model for it. The heart of the first half of this chapter treats the variations on the theme of Central Europe during the 1980s, comparing the visions of Miłosz and Kundera, and recounting the famous debate between Kundera and Brodsky over the wider implications of claiming Central Europe. Jewish culture as the defining supra-ethnic paradigm for what Central Europe might have been presents a paradox: how can a culture that is largely no longer *present* in Central Europe define its essence in the late twentieth century? This chapter also takes up the question of empire, and a different burden of responsibility which faced the Transatlantic Central European intellectuals from Poland, Hungary, and the former Czechoslovakia. The next section examines a face-to-face dialogue which took place at the International Writers' Conference in Lisbon in 1988 among Central European writers, their Russian counterparts, and other voices present in the audience. The Lisbon Conference presents us with one of the strongest links between the subject position and rhetorical philosophies of the Central European intellectuals and the postcolonial writers and theorists who shared their space. It is also reminiscent of the relationship between the writing subject and the object of investigation that we see in Chapter One. A dramatic "postcolonial intervention" in Lisbon highlights the political tension between Central European and Russian writers, but also illuminates the fact that this is largely a disagreement over typologies, and not practice or ethics.

However, all of these divergences and disagreements hinge on the Cold War East–West binary, and in the post-1989 period a new axis emerges: that of North–South. Maria Todorova's full frontal attack on the concept of

Central Europe in *Imagining the Balkans* inspires the second half of this chapter, which presents a counterargument to Todorova's, focusing on the complex relationship between Central and Southeastern Europe. In particular, the significance of Yugoslavia (as a utopic political experiment bridging ethnic divides and political dualism) for the Central Europeans seems insurmountable. If, as Todorova claims, Central Europeans seceded from the larger terrain of Eastern Europe in order to rejoin Europe and usurp the benefits and attention of the West, then why is more and more of the Central European discourse about Yugoslavia throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s? And why does the concept implode *not* in 1989, as one might expect if it was really fueled by Cold War dissident culture, but rather in 1994–1995, as Yugoslavia itself implodes? Close readings of essays by Vladimir Dedijer and Danilo Kiš reveal the differences between the Southeastern European position which denies its plurality (a haunting parallel with the abuses of the Yugoslav Helsinki group discussed in Chapter Four), and the Central/Southeastern European position which is dependent on the intellectual proximity of North and South.

Part II: Further Essays in Contesting Geography and Redefining Culture

Chapter Three, “Borders, Editors, and Readers in Motion,” is divided between several approaches: synchronic, diachronic, cartographic, and critical/theoretical. The first section offers a cross-section of political-cultural journals produced by Hungarians in post-Trianon, formerly Hungarian territories; the second section presents a fifty-year chronology of two men's interwoven careers publishing journals, first in interwar Poland, then through the Second World War, and finally in postwar emigration in Paris and London. One clear pattern that emerges in both contexts is the need for a diversity of voices in emigration, for one journal to “bear the standard” of the national culture so that another is free to leave that burden of representation behind in favor of avant-garde experiment or intercultural exchange. But just how far removed from the historical and political realm can the Central European writer stretch?

The other major case study of Chapter Three, the diachronic one tracing the path of two famous Polish editors, is very deeply grounded in the political and social reality of life in emigration after the war. Here we can see the effect that changes in the internal leadership of the Soviet satellite countries (in this case Poland) had on the artistic communities living abroad. In the period just after the war, two journals based in Paris and London, *Kultura* and *Wiadomości*, respectively, attempted to fill a cultural void for the Polish population living in emigration. One of them, *Kultura*, was much more successful in reaching an audience both inside and outside of Poland: although it addressed a Polish audience, it took as its topos a crisis facing Europe as a whole—and represented very clearly in the political schism running through the center of Polish culture.

My quantitative, GIS-based study of the reach of *Kultura* presents new evidence about its impact around the world, as well as its penetration into the Polish diaspora. Using metadata extracted from the physical copies of the journal itself (concerning the date and locations of the authors, letter writers, and funders of the journal), I have constructed a database of the geographical footprint of *Kultura*. This is meant as a methodological supplement to the purely *auteur*-driven study of Giedroyc and Grydzewski above. In this section, I am able to examine questions about the reception of the journal from a global, “distant reading” point of view.⁴ We learn that many more layers of the Polish diaspora than previously imagined were engaged with the journal as a node in a larger cultural system: as a way of receiving and sending information to the homeland.

In the last chapter, this book moves from its regional focus on Central and Southeastern Europe to include cultural work-arounds. Although it has not yet been codified in standard dictionaries, “work-around” could be defined as a set of steps used to compensate for or avoid dealing with a

⁴ For an example of several working papers that adopt this methodology, see litlab.stanford.edu. Although Moretti’s voluminous oeuvre in this field is well known, Jockers’s work on Irish émigrés and Irish-American authors in the Western United States has been just as influential on this community. See Allison et al. (2012); Jockers (2013).

problem rather than fixing it.⁵ It has a strong legacy in the history of technology, bridging the gap between the development of new tools and the human practices that redefine their use. There is a material, artisanal sensibility to the concept of the work-around, even if it takes place entirely on digital terms: with the work-around, the human traits of improvisation and tricksterism trump the logic of the machine. The term can take on a positive or negative valence, depending on our perspective on who is doing the tinkering. The most extreme example that I present is in the former Yugoslavia in the late 1980s, when figures known to the West as “dissidents” repurposed the language of human rights for their own ends, very much against the aims of the international community.

A close examination of the discourse surrounding citizenship and protection of minorities, which circulated in Yugoslavia simultaneously to the publications of the Transatlantic Central Europeans, reveals some confusion surrounding analogous figures, such as Dobrica Ćosić and Franjo Tuđman. They were initially labeled “dissidents” because of their activities in movements that were in opposition to the state; however, that label was dropped in the early 1990s, as their motivations and intentions became clearly marked as nationalist. Analysis of primary documents reveals the local, state, and international use and abuse of these labels, to detrimental effect. This is one of the legacies of the Central European *and* dissident movements, but it also opens the door to new configurations in the post-Cold War period. Case studies of media censorship and press freedom in post-Soviet Ukraine and Belarus bring us closer to the present, where we can see the same patterns of repression, work-around, and amplification of these signals in the transmedial and transatlantic sphere. Chapter Four asks what we can learn from a more abstracted view of the movement of texts across borders, and whether there are new creative moments that are the result of more recent distortions of meaning and restrictions in the access to information.

⁵ It is also not meant to be a permanent solution, and in the computer science and engineering world, work-arounds can be dangerous things, as they were not designed to bear the weight of the whole system. A work-around left in place for too long (instead of properly addressing the problem head-on) can sometimes cause the whole system to fail.

In coining the term “Transatlantic Central Europe,”⁶ I am deliberately invoking a paradoxical geographic notion in order to liberate many of the concepts and practices discussed from the boundaries of nation-states, Iron Curtains, and hopefully even the East–West and North–South binaries that have limited the idea of “Central Europe” for much of its existence. This term and the three chapters that concern themselves with the region directly are meant to describe the entire system of cross-border circulation of texts and ideas, and not just the singular, mythopoetic idea of “Central Europe.” It is not intended as a transhistorical phenomenon—a clean, exportable matrix that one could easily identify in other parts of the world, and which can be applied to any cross-border transfer of texts. In other words, no simple set of abstracted conditions will derive Transatlantic Central Europe elsewhere, as Gene Sharp’s do-it-yourself application for democratic regime change promises.⁷ This is because Transatlantic Central Europe and the *samizdat-tamizdat* system were mutually constitutive.⁸ Among other topics, the impulse to define Central Europe as an inherently non-Soviet sphere drove essayists to circulate these texts; at the same time, the essay as a mode of writing, the format of the political-cultural journal, and the system in which these essays circulated all contributed to its precise historical meaning, embedded in medium as well as epistemology.

In borrowing the term “work-around,” I am striving to marry the discourse of cross-border transfer as we encounter it during the Cold War with a larger conversation that has evolved since, about the free exchange of ideas and information over a nominally stateless and unregulated media environment (although anybody who studies Internet freedom must immediately recognize that it is still bounded and regulated by

⁶ For Poles, this phrase will also evoke Witold Gombrowicz’s postwar novel *Trans-Atlantyka* (1953), which similarly contests geography and redefines (Polish) culture beyond the nation.

⁷ See Sharp’s three-volume treatise *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, originally published in 1973.

⁸ The *samizdat-tamizdat* system refers to the exchange and dissemination of underground (*samizdat*) and émigré (*tamizdat*) texts during the Cold War, via journals, book smuggling, radio broadcasting, and physical meetings in person. The most comprehensive study of this system to date is Friederike Kind-Kovács’s *Written Here, Published There: How Underground Literature Crossed the Iron Curtain* (2014).

nation-states). “Cultural work-around” in the Transatlantic Central European sense means that where politics puts up a border, culture still flows around it. Furthermore, this flowing-around is not a neutral act, because it involves deliberate actions taken to circumvent the system, it involves providing access to information that political actors have tried to keep contained, and at times it can generate an alternative cultural public sphere. Finally, by applying the term work-around to the entire twentieth century, and not just the “digital age,” I would like to open up the possibility of exploring virtuality in earlier modes of communication, such as the virtual network of *samizdat-tamizdat*, or the entirely virtual concept of Transatlantic Central Europe.

This is not a book about regime change. Transatlantic Central Europe did not bring down the Berlin Wall. In fact, despite many deep cultural shifts, such as the disillusionment of some of Central Europe’s key protagonists, the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, the bankruptcy of the liberal humanist philosophies that fueled it, and the deluge of information via new systems of cross-border transfer of texts, I am quite sure the movement can be as relevant today as it was in the 1980s. While “old member states” of the European Union are indeed grappling with their ever-increasing hybridity with the Global South, the fundamental tension in European politics remains: *where is the Center and what is farther to the East?* Transatlantic Central Europe was a willful attempt to contest the geography and cultural conditioning imposed by the Cold War; it is not hard to find writers, artists, and activists today in the region who are posing similar questions of different borders.

PART ONE

Cross Currents and Its Transatlantic Central
European Imaginary

The Political-Cultural Journal: The Case of *Cross Currents*

Cross Currents: A Yearbook of Central European Culture

The essay cunningly anchors itself in texts as though they were simply there and had authority.

—Theodor Adorno, “The Essay as Form”

The idea of Central Europe as a culture distinct from “Eastern Europe” came into mainstream discussions in the West in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Original and reprinted essays published in the journal *Cross Currents* by intellectuals from the region, such as Czesław Miłosz, Milan Kundera, Václav Havel, György Konrád, Stanisław Barańczak, Adam Zagajewski, and Adam Michnik, gathered in a single forum discussions that had been circulating at the time in magazines like the *New York Review of Books*, the *New Yorker*, and at various university events and colloquia.⁹ The political project behind this question was nothing less than to situate USSR satellite countries from Poland to Yugoslavia in the center of Europe—between East and West—by proving that Russian culture was a foreign imposition on the satellite countries of the Soviet Union.

Cross Currents was born out of the East European Festival, a 1981 exhibition and conference sponsored and organized by the University of

⁹ For a detailed social history of the intellectuals involved in this movement, as well as their methods of transferring texts, see Kind-Kovács (2014), and particularly chapter four on the connection between the materiality of *samizdat-tamizdat* and the discourse surrounding Central Europe.

Michigan Center for East European Studies to celebrate artists from Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁰ Ladislav Matejka, who would become one of the two founding editors of the journal, was not directly involved in organizing the event, but he attended, and through conversations with Czesław Miłosz and others present, decided he had enough material and potential contributors to publish a yearly journal of Central European culture. From the beginning, the project was meant to go beyond conference proceedings. Although the first issue included several essays delivered at the conference, most notably Miłosz's keynote lecture "Looking for the Center," it represented a wider geographic and aesthetic vision than what was illustrated by the artists and works on exhibit at Ann Arbor.

To that point, Matejka's research, teaching, and publications had been primarily in Slavic linguistics and semiotics. But he was searching for a way to make his contribution to the broader field of Slavic literature. Born in 1919 in the town of Suché Vrbné, Czechoslovakia, Matejka was a student at Charles University in Prague at the onset of the Nazi occupation in 1938. He was able to continue his studies after the war, earning his first doctorate in 1948 while working as the cultural editor of *Lidové Noviny* (Stoltz 1984, ii). He migrated to Sweden after the Communist takeover in Prague, and taught at the University of Lund for five years before enrolling at Harvard for a second PhD focusing on structural linguistics, under the advisement of Roman Jakobson (his 1961 PhD dissertation was entitled "Reported Speech in Contemporary Written Standard Russian"). Jakobson was in fact indirectly responsible for Matejka's path of emigration: fleeing Prague in 1948, Matejka had followed the same route out of Czechoslovakia through Sweden, and then to Harvard, that Jakobson had taken in 1941 (Labov 2004, 243).

While the early part of Matejka's career was heavily influenced by Jakobson's semiotic theories, and many of his most important publications at Michigan were in this field, Matejka had fundamental disagreements with his mentor's approach to Slavic culture. Jakobson saw a pan-Slavic

¹⁰ The full text of the journal *Cross Currents* has been digitized by the University of Michigan Library and is openly accessible and searchable at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/crossc>.

influence of a long-dormant but ever-present Byzantine culture, which inevitably reawakens in one Slavic culture whenever it is stamped out somewhere else. Matejka claims that he was always opposed to this neo-Slavonophilic way of viewing the region—that it did not allow for the other historical and cultural influences, especially Western ones, on the Central European countries in the Soviet political imperium. *Cross Currents* was a way for Matejka to express that disagreement, to complement his prolific publishing on the philological side of language study with new work in literature, history, and culture. Editors at the University of Michigan Press were receptive to this approach thanks to Matejka's successful publishing record of materials that became standard textbooks in semiotics and Slavic linguistics, and agreed to fund the journal for its first two years. After that, Matejka was left to his own fundraising devices, which will be described in some detail below. For the first issue, Matejka worked together with his colleague in the Slavic Department, Benjamin Stoltz, to amplify a vision of Central European literature and culture where the East European Festival left off.

At this time, interest in Central European literature and culture was steadily increasing around academic departments, literary journals, and the popular press in North America. In some cases this movement was swept up in Reagan-era policies supporting dissident democratic movements around the world. The establishment of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the second half of 1982 is one of the best examples of this process.¹¹ This was the most explicit state-sponsored expression of the US commitment to support democracy around the world through cultural diplomacy, so-called “soft power” which was meant to complement or even supplant military action around the globe.

¹¹ The NED website includes a brief summary of its history by David Lowe, “Idea to Reality: A Brief History of the National Endowment for Democracy,” as well as President Reagan’s address to members of the British Parliament on June 8, 1983, in which he first proposes the idea of NED. It is worth noting how much Reagan’s speechwriters borrowed from the language of the Central Europeans: “In the center of Warsaw there is a sign that notes the distances to two capitals. ... The marker says that the distances from Warsaw to Moscow and Warsaw to Brussels are equal. The sign makes this point: Poland is not East or West. Poland is at the center of European Civilization. It has contributed mightily to that civilization. It is doing so today by being magnificently unreconciled to oppression.”

Matejka said he was encouraged to apply to NED for funds for *Cross Currents*, but was turned down because of what was seen as the journal's lack of clear political motive. In his own words: "The rejection of my application was explained that this periodical is not for the political action which would directly help Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia, but it was written for the American public" (286). Matejka also said that he knew several of the specific members of different émigré groups who had been asked to review the *Cross Currents* NED application, and recommended against funding the journal for this reason. In the context of the early 1980s, this was probably for the best, as Matejka added: "Getting money from them, one would probably have been forced to acknowledge them, [this] would not add to the reputation [of the journal]" (288). This comment suggests his fundamental orientation towards aesthetic and cultural content over explicitly political gestures. Although there was a concrete political motive for the founding of the journal and a political context that determined its impact on the English-speaking world—*Cross Currents* was clearly opposed to the Soviet domination of Central Europe, and presented the writing and biographies of several major dissident actors—the journal should be distinguished from publishing projects addressed directly to dissident groups in the region itself.

Matejka's polemic with Jakobson was more taxonomic than political in nature, and began with the simple question, "What is the source of Czech cultural heritage?" By claiming that there are shared cultural traits to be uncovered by reading Czech literature next to Hungarian literature, Matejka complicated the understanding of Czech literature as a minor Slavic literature: "The real idea was not to be political—to promote politically the Central Europe theme, but it was rather to show that there is, in Central Europe, there were certain cultural trends, rather important ones, which are not known, so it was a cultural promotion rather than a political [one]. . . . And so that [']s what I mean] when I say that I'm in conflict with Roman Jakobson, his promotion of Slavic culture" (246). It would be a mistake to see the disagreement between Matejka and Jakobson as simply another articulation of the Slavonophile–Westernizer debate at the heart of Russian intellectual history, although their respective positions do resonate within that history. This distinction will be

explored more closely in Chapter Two, in a discussion of the initial concept of “Central Europeanness” put forth in *Cross Currents*.

When the journal began publication, broad interest already existed in writing about Central Europe, and in figures like Miłosz, Kundera, and Kiš. The two most important logistical challenges for Matejka in publishing the journal were therefore: 1) financing, particularly after the initial two years of support from the University of Michigan ran out; and 2) editorial decisions about the form that the yearbook would take—that is, models for its design. Without the yearbook and other publications such as the *New York Review of Books* and the *New Yorker*, or Philip Roth’s Writers from the Other Europe series with Penguin Books, the idea of Central Europe would not have gained the momentum that it did during the 1980s. In addition to describing the general cultural climate at the moment of founding the journal, this study should also address the question of why it appeared at this particular institution and at this particular time.

Shortly after Matejka arrived in Ann Arbor as an assistant professor in 1959, he began a new series at the University of Michigan Press, Michigan Slavic Materials, “established to serve graduate Slavic Studies.” It was initially dedicated to monographs on formal approaches to Slavic literature, but as the series evolved into Michigan Slavic Publication (MSP, which continues to publish today), it would broaden its focus to include a wider range of subjects, and eventually *Cross Currents*. The first volume published in the series in 1962 was Jakobson’s *Studies in Russian Philology*, a short monograph on linguistic analysis and on the morphological structure of the Old Russian patronymics. The next volume was *Readings in Russian Poetics*, the first of many of Matejka’s edited collections intended to serve as semiotics textbooks.

The corpus of material to further semiotic criticism through dozens of publications also took on the character of a political-cultural institution, as demonstrated in the foreword to the 1977 edition of the MSP textbook, *Readings in Soviet Semiotics*: “For more than two decades intellectual life in the Soviet Union has harbored an extraordinary ferment that only in the last five years or so has begun to win wide recognition as a powerful phenomenon at the very forefront of world thought. The ferment is the Soviet variant of the international structural-semiotic trend” (Matejka

1977, ii). It does not take much imagination to hear a rhetorical echo of the *Communist Manifesto* and all of its ghostly antecedents here. The text then elaborates on the expansion and potential impact of the “international structural-semiotic trend” on the Soviet Union: “Although always subject to the vicissitude of a strongly ambivalent attitude in its regard on the part of Soviet officialdom, the movement gained a steadily increasing, enthusiastic following in Soviet intellectual and academic circles and, as a result, has undergone what might be described as an ‘explosive’ theoretical and methodological evolution” (iii).

Matejka heralded semiotics as a cultural institution with an anti-hegemonic potential without being explicitly political, foreshadowing the thinking behind *Cross Currents*. Matejka positioned both poles of the Slavonophile–Westernizer split in opposition to “Soviet officialdom,” and placed Jakobson’s theoretical work within the Western side of the spectrum, so one cannot dismiss his departure from Jakobson as simply a rift with Slavonophiles. According to this logic, Soviet semiotics (née Russian Poetics) would serve as the intellectual gateway into Russian culture for the Western reader, as well as for the Russian émigrés now firmly planted at universities across Western Europe and North America.

Another “Central European” motif raised in this foreword to *Soviet Semiotics* is that of the intellectual diaspora: “Very recent years have witnessed a shift of Soviet governmental policy toward overt disapproval and repressive measures. . . . This latest government ‘crackdown,’ however regrettable from other points of view, has had the felicitous side effect of supplying universities around the world with émigré scholars whose number includes several of the movement’s most eminent representatives” (ix). This “felicitous side effect” of repression was echoed in other intellectual migrations. It also described the conditions for political exiles and émigrés who arrived in Paris throughout the nineteenth century, or the flight of European Jews to New York and Los Angeles and other academic centers in the 1930s. Looking at the output of Michigan Slavic Publications in the twenty years preceding the publication of *Cross Currents*, we can see Matejka’s earlier effort to document a particular stratum of Russian emigration, beginning with the consequences of the migration of Russian formalists such as Jakobson to Prague, and the effects this had on the

Prague linguistic circle; his textbooks then chronicle their further movement into Western Europe and the United States, and their influence there.¹²

Therefore, when Matejka claimed that he “had to publish the *Semiotics of Culture* in order to sponsor *Cross Currents*” (Labov 2004, 257), what he actually illustrates is the success of his earlier campaign to promote his mentor and the product of an original emigration. If MSP had not been so effective at disseminating the linguistic imprint of formalism, it is much less likely that the university would have sponsored the first two years of *Cross Currents*. After this initial capital, Matejka raised money from one issue to the next, subsidizing some of his efforts with the proceeds from other MSP printings, as mentioned above.

Distribution and Diaspora

Matejka’s stories about how *Cross Currents* was funded are a mixture of gossip, patronage, serendipitous windfalls, and cataclysm. The largest single amount he ever received was \$10,000 from an anonymous donor in New York. He later discovered the money came from Barbara Piasecka Johnson, a Polish woman who married into the Johnson & Johnson fortune and was active throughout the 1980s in trying to influence events back in Poland.¹³ Another Czechoslovak émigré, named Mrs. Količek, an acquaintance of Matejka’s living in London, contributed \$3,000. It seemed as if Mrs. Količek would become a regular supporter of *Cross Currents*, which would have been a great relief to the editor, except that she found herself in tax difficulties with the British government, which precluded any further donation.

Aside from personal donations and the university itself, another obvious source of funding for the magazine were the foundations that supported East European arts and culture. *Cross Currents* received several

¹² For an extended treatment of the theoretical trajectory of the formalists and their progeny from East to West, see Renfrew and Tihanov (2009).

¹³ Matejka claims that Ms. Johnson also tried to intervene when the Gdańsk shipyard where Lech Wałęsa had worked was in danger of failing in 1989 (Labov 2004, 258).

midsize grants over the twelve years of its existence from sources that included a foundation granting to Polish Studies at Harvard, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the National Endowment for Humanities. For the first four issues of the yearbook, only Matejka and Stoltz's names appear on the title page as editors, but starting with *Cross Currents* 5 (1986), an extensive advisory committee and editorial board, as well as the small editorial staff, are listed.

Advisory Committee: Stanisław Barańczak, Avigdor Dagan, Danilo Kiš, György Konrád, Milan Kundera, Czesław Miłosz, H. Gordon Skilling, Josef Škvorecký, Tomas Venclova, Wiktor Weintraub

Editorial Board: Bogdana Carpenter, Herbert Eagle, František Galan, Emery George, George Gibian, George Grabowicz, William E. Harkins, Michael H. Heim, John Mercereau Jr., David Packman, Ivan Sanders, Ingo Seidler, Benjamin Stoltz, Roman Szporluk, Paul Wilson, Henry Zohn

Irwin B. Titunik (Associated Editor); Miriam Adams (Editorial Assistant)

In the interview I conducted in 2000, Matejka admitted that the advisory committee was primarily in place for fundraising purposes, to lend authority, prestige, and a sense of permanence to the journal: "I was just told that in order to get some support, there must be a committee." About the editorial board, Matejka pointed out: "Well, these are, of course, my colleagues from the department!" (Labov 2004, 267). This understanding of who might lend authority, and the fact of who his colleagues were in the Michigan Slavic Department, might explain why this is an overwhelmingly male group. Although there were many women active in Slavic studies, and the journal featured and discussed work by female authors, the close-knit circle of intellectuals and scholars behind the reinvention of Central Europe was predominantly male. There were no women on the advisory committee, and Bogdana Carpenter was the only woman on the board. The members of the advisory committee and editorial board did not always play a meaningful role in steering the direction of the journal, but they contributed articles regularly. Barańczak, Dagan, Kiš, Konrád, Skilling, and Venclova were the most active advisory board members, but

Matejka characterized the editorial process of *Cross Currents* as one that ran “rather autocratically.”¹⁴

George Soros, an acquaintance of Matejka’s, also contributed to the project, more often logistically—recommending articles and arranging for distribution through his foundation based in Sweden—than economically. Notwithstanding, a \$5,000 donation from Soros was enough to cover the cost of an entire issue (286). As a rule, Matejka did not pay royalties to his authors, and his translators were paid little. Contributors were for the most part generous with the permission to reprint. Matejka occasionally received modest royalties when major editorial houses published translations of Central European fiction.¹⁵ The production costs for *Cross Currents* were modest. In addition to printing costs, the main expenses of the journal involved typesetting—up to \$5 a page, for an approximately total of \$2,000 per issue—and a copy editor.

At its height, *Cross Currents* achieved remarkable levels of circulation and distribution. Some of its texts were secretly carried out of Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest, rendering it in part a *tamizdat* publication. Others were reprints of articles that had appeared first in *samizdat* within these countries.¹⁶ But in addition to its circulation in the West, *Cross Currents* found its way back into Central Europe, creating a dialogue between the

¹⁴ At the same time, he would not have been able to produce this yearbook without the help of key figures like Benjamin Stoltz and Irwin Titunik. In his article “The Role of the Periodical Editor,” Matthew Philpotts draws on Bourdieu to theorize the “editorial habitus” that develops in the dynamic between an editor and the institution of the journal itself, where the editor maximizes the journal’s agency in accumulating various forms of capital. Philpotts delineates three types of editors, and Matejka neatly fills his category of the “charismatic editor” who is particularly skilled in gathering social capital to further the cause of the journal (2012, 45).

¹⁵ For example, when Harcourt Brace Jovanovich published Michael Henry Heim’s translation of Hrabal’s *Too Loud a Solitude* (1990), they reprinted the text from *Cross Currents*, without the illustration. Matejka was appreciative that Heim was able to earn some money for this translation, as Heim was relatively unknown at the time and had not been paid for his work by MSP.

¹⁶ The terms *samizdat* and *tamizdat* were both derived from Gosizdat, the Soviet state publishing house. *Samizdat* (*sam-seb’ya-izdat*, meaning “I publish myself”) denotes many different types of texts that circulated outside of the official sphere in the Soviet Union and satellite countries, starting from the mid-1950s. As a term, *tamizdat* (*tam*, meaning “there”) covers all émigré publishing that was linked to this underground sphere, either because it printed/reprinted *samizdat* texts, or because it was smuggled

two regions over the course of several issues. Communicating with contributors in Central Europe was tricky, and Matejka described the complex interpersonal and intraregional network that governed the journal's circulation:

LADISLAV MATEJKA. [Jindřich Chalupecký] was a very good Czech critic, living in Prague, and kind of a semi-dissident. So I got this article from Prague. And he gave me permission to publish that here, and say that he—it was kind of strange, he was not afraid of being identified as a contributor to this issue. He was rather not young, and ill, and simply was not afraid.

JESSIE LABOV. Did you know—did he see the other issue in Prague? The people you talked to in Prague, had they been reading them?

LM. Yes, he had all issues of *Cross Currents*, Chalupecký. I visited him, I don't know how he got these issues, because I didn't send them to him, but somehow he was getting it through Poland, and the distributor was Mr. Janova in Sweden, I mentioned his name. Mr. Janova, professor of atomic ... The center was rather politically active, and he was distributing them, he had some contacts via Poland, Mr. Chalupecký was associated with them somehow. It was easier to do it directly via Poland at that time than directly through Prague. In fact, their contact in Poland, after the change, became the Polish ambassador in Prague. I met him.

JL. What's his name?

LM. In fact, I did not know he was the contact, but [in 1989] the Polish ambassador came to Vienna, some conference there, and he came to me and said "I am the Polish ambassador in Prague, and I know about you because I was sending materials to Mr. Chalupecký in Prague." (268)

The contact in question was Jacek Baluch, Polish ambassador to the Czech Republic from 1990 to 1995, now a philologist of Czech culture and politics at Jagiellonian University. Matejka mentions using the same route through Sweden, where he still had many contacts from his own

into the region and read illegally. For a fuller discussion of the evolution of these terms, see Kind-Kovács and Labov (2013, 2–4).

emigration, to secure the text of Havel's famous essay "The Power of the Powerless." On that occasion, it appears that a branch of the Soros Foundation based in Stockholm was the intermediary. This group became interested in directing material from inside the region, like Havel's essay, to Matejka, and in arranging for distribution. Matejka explained: "They were also actually helping me to get *CC* into Czechoslovakia. Havel received the first issue, received through Professor Skilling, who is also here. He's Canadian, Toronto University. He visited Havel before Havel was—when Havel was still a dissident living in Hrádeček, in Eastern Bohemia. And Skilling took an issue of *CC* with him and gave it to Mr. Havel" (274).

Unlike publications designed to cross borders clandestinely, *Cross Currents* was conspicuously large: a generous 10 × 12 inches, with dramatic photographs and illustrations on its front and back cover, and an average of 350 pages for the first ten issues. It simply does not look like *samizdat*, which is designed to be easily hidden. The journal's heft led me to ask Matejka about who he considered to be the intended audience of the journal: opposition movements in Central Europe? The various national diaspora populations living in the West? His answer was revealing: "I never had planned to do that, not at all. Indeed, it was a publication for the American public" (251). Indeed, apart from the high-profile authors contributing to it, the journal lacked any clear sign of connection with the Central European diaspora. This distinguished it from other contemporary publications about the region, such as the Paris-based *tamizdat* journals *Lettres Internationales*, *Kultura*, *Kontinent*, *Listy*, and *Beszedő*. While Matejka often drew from his circle of Czech acquaintances and colleagues to recruit authors and articles for *Cross Currents*, he did not always seek support from the Czech émigré community, because of their sensitivity to figures with complicated political pasts.¹⁷ The relationship between the editor of an émigré publication and the corresponding diaspora is never an easy one, especially when it comes to politically controversial

¹⁷ Matejka mentions as one example the article by Jarka Burian on "The Liberated Theater of Voskovec and Werich," which drew objections from the émigré community because of their politically provocative theater in the interwar era, as well as Werich's return to Communist Czechoslovakia (Labov 2004, 253–54).

writers; this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, in relation to Hungarian and Polish émigré publications. Here I will simply note that Matejka did not see the diaspora as a necessary audience for his project. Nor was *Cross Currents* intended primarily for scholars. The audience Matejka had in mind, and that he eventually reached, was inspired by his direct model for the yearbook, the *New York Review of Books*.¹⁸

Why *The New York Review of Books*?

Any scholar researching the field of texts about Central Europe in the 1980s eventually finds herself shuttling between *Cross Currents* and the *New York Review of Books*. Matejka stated that it was an explicit model for him, but even without his statement about this direct influence, the correspondence between the two becomes clear very quickly. On the subject of Central Europe, the two publications share authors, themes, references, and a strikingly similar position on Reagan-era Cold War politics. In her insightful article on the treatment of Central European themes in *NYRB* of the 1980s, Friederike Kind-Kovács quotes Jason Epstein on the common values held by the *Review*'s cofounders:

The Lowells [Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Hardwick], Bob [Silvers], Barbara [Epstein], and I share certain values but had no ideological position or political program. We valued literature, the other arts, and science as the greatest human achievements. We believed that good writers could make almost any subject interesting and intelligible and bore the obligation to do so within their powers; that official points of view and government activities should be viewed skeptically, and that human rights abuses whether inflicted by communists, fascists, religious fanatics, or ourselves should be exposed. We opposed the Soviet Union as well as the war in Vietnam. (quoted in Kind 2002, 25)

¹⁸ "My model for [*Cross Currents*] . . . well, it's not modest really, was the *New York Review of Books*" (264).

Kind-Kovács points out that “to expose ‘human rights abuses ... inflicted by the Communists’ ... can be seen as the motive for the *New York Review*’s later function as a platform for dissident literature from the Soviet bloc” (25).

The first issue of the *New York Review of Books* appeared in February 1963, in the midst of a printers’ strike that began in December 1962 and closed down the *New York Times* (Silvers and Epstein 1988, v). The founders of the *NYRB* were motivated to start a new journal by their growing dissatisfaction with the *New York Times Book Review*; the strike simply provided a window of opportunity. Another major influence on the *NYRB* founders was the *Partisan Review*, which Silvers, the Epsteins, and their colleagues admired both for its early critique of Stalinism in the 1930s and eventually for its position as an intellectual and political touchstone in the United States (Kind 2002, 24). Examining the “Symposia, discussion, exchanges” sponsored by and published in the *Partisan Review* between 1934 and 1963 shows the similarities with the types of debate and discussion one would find in the *NYRB* today. As if to solidify this genealogical link, the inaugural issue of the magazine included a review by Irving Howe of the *Partisan Review Anthology*.¹⁹ Howe finds that the anthology lacks the spirit of political courage that characterized the magazine’s legacy, and that it does not reflect “the tumult of the years when *The Partisan Review* was fully engaged, fighting Stalinism before that became fashionable and attacking the gentility and conservatism of both the academy and certain New Critics” (Howe 1988, 51).

Despite this explicit chain of influence between two American literary institutions with similar political and aesthetic inspirations and *Cross Currents*, Matejka described his frustration with *NYRB* for not reviewing *Cross Currents*. The only mention of Matejka’s yearbook in the literary journal is in a footnote to Kundera’s essay “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” published in the April 26, 1984, issue of *NYRB*. Matejka commented: “I had to pay quite a lot of money, for a while, for publishing ads

¹⁹ Howe does comment on his political differences with the *Partisan Review* as well: “Where *PR* did fail significantly was in responding to the rise of McCarthyism during the early fifties. The magazine was of course opposed to McCarthy’s hooliganism, but it failed to take the lead on the issue of freedom which could then once more have imbued the intellectuals with some fighting spirit” (Howe 1988, 53).

in the *NYRB*, announcing it. I paid over \$1,000 for it. One day they discovered that this was really not fair, and it became a little cheaper, but that was all. They never reviewed the publication” (Labov 2004, 252). When I suggested that *Cross Currents* could be used as a kind of reference book to learn more about Central European topics brought up in *NYRB*, Matejka described the relationship between the two publications as one in which *Cross Currents* was a “supplement” to *NYRB*, publishing “articles [that] would not be published by them” (252). Significantly, Matejka never reprinted articles which appeared in the *New York Review*, although he reprinted from many other sources. This is not a coincidence; in Matejka’s vision, he simply assumed that the imagined reader of *Cross Currents* would have already read any article published in *NYRB*.

The first issue of *Cross Currents* (1982) already reveals its hybrid nature, as a journal with multiple audiences and a very expansive definition of the region. As mentioned above, the inspiration and much of the material in the first issue came from the 1981 East European Festival organized by University of Michigan’s Center for East European Studies. Czesław Miłosz’s keynote address, “Looking for a Center,” became the preface for *Cross Currents*’ inaugural issue. A few other presentations at the conference—by Roman Szporluk, H. Gordon Skilling, and Škvorecký’s “American Motifs in the Work of Bohumil Hrabal”—also made it into the first issue of the journal; the rest Matejka collected from other sources.²⁰

The front cover of the journal’s first issue features a photograph of *Kad-dish*, a sculpture by Aleš Veselý (see Fig. 1). Although Matejka had never seen the sculpture himself, the monumentally torturous image of *Kad-dish* struck him as emblematic of what the magazine was about, especially because of the story behind the sculpture’s creation and abandonment in the countryside. On the inside cover of the issue is a caption by Fred

²⁰ Milan Kundera was a second great supporter of the journal. In fact, when the publication was running into trouble towards the end of the 1980s, Kundera proposed to Matejka that they move *Cross Currents* to Paris, with the help of François Furet: “We were seriously discussing the publishing. When it became clear to me that this move would mean, that somehow it would mean I would be censored in a way, that I would not have the same freedom in shaping it, and in particular François Furet is a very respectable man, a great historian, the man who gave Kundera his job” (Labov 2004, 264–65). Matejka decided instead at that point to move to Yale University Press.

Jelinek, who photographed the sculpture on a trip back to Czechoslovakia. It is titled “From a letter by an American visitor”:

The most breathtaking sculpture I have ever seen stood in 1978 (and maybe stands now) in Středokluky, a village less than ten miles from Prague. It is erected in open air in a somewhat fenced-off area next to a ramshackle barn filled with other welded but smaller-scale sculptures, all created by Aleš Veselý, who also owns the property. His large construction was made around 1968 in the iron works of Ostrava under a government program. Veselý named the work *Kaddish*, the Jewish Prayer for the Dead, in memory of his recently deceased father. It was supposed to have been incorporated in a memorial for the victims of German concentration camps, but those plans were shelved after the Soviet occupation. Instead, the sculpture was shipped to Středokluky to be hidden from the general public.

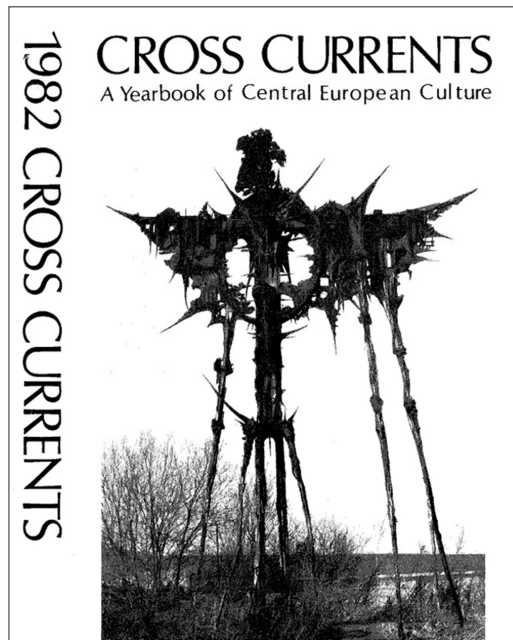


Figure 1. Front cover of *Cross Currents* 1 (1982),
Aleš Veselý's sculpture *Kaddish*.

(Photo by Fred Jelinek. Courtesy of Michigan Slavic Publications.)

In other words, this sculpture came into being as a *state-funded* project in the politically and aesthetically free spirit of the Prague Spring, and was originally supposed to stand in Wenceslas Square, in the center of Prague; with the repression of Dubček's reforms and of the liberal atmosphere that surrounded them, such a strident evocation of Jewish memory had to be censored.²¹ Its appearance on the cover of *Cross Currents* marks the journal as a *tamizdat* expression of a discourse (about Judaism and the Holocaust) and an aesthetic (monstrous) that were not permitted in post-1968 Prague. As a sort of counterpoint, Matejka placed another "American" text on Kaddish, an excerpt from Allen Ginsberg's poem of the same name:

Tortured and beaten in the skull—What mad hallucinations of the damned that drive me out of my own skull to seek Eternity till I find Peace for Thee, O Poetry—and for all humankind call on the Origin

Death which is the mother of the universe! —Now wear your nakedness forever, white flowers in your hair, your marriage sealed behind the sky—no revolution might destroy that maidenhood—

Both works were created in memory of deceased parents, Veselý's father and Ginsberg's mother, Naomi. *Cross Currents*, then, is presented between two artistic renditions of the Jewish prayers for the dead—as told by two American visitors who could physically return to the place where Matejka, Miłosz, Kundera, and others could not (Jelinek emigrated as a Jew and not as a political émigré, and therefore could go back). Despite these political and religious valences, both poem and sculpture are intensely personal in their terms of address. They do not demand to be read exclusively in this way—in fact, Veselý and Ginsberg welcome the integration of the social into their work—but instead share a commitment to both levels of interpretation. Many articles in *Cross Currents* will share this aspect of personal testimony which can be extrapolated to comment on larger issues, either by émigrés who are remembering a world that they

²¹ Matejka claimed that he tried to convince the University of Michigan to buy the sculpture at the time, but Veselý was not interested in selling it.

left, or by Westerners who visit the region and are charged with the responsibility of bringing texts, images, and ideas back across the border.

I am reading this journal not as a series of individual voices but from one end to the other, as a single, coherent text.²² The first part of the issue treats the subject of Central Europe more directly than the second half, with several articles addressing the question “What Is Central Europe?” The rest is an exercise in *regional* canon formation, claiming several writers as “Central European”—including some extreme examples such as Rainer Maria Rilke and Elias Canetti, and a curious redefinition of Béla Bartók as (partly) Slovak—dividing the selections between Czech and Slovak culture, and presenting Polish, Czech, and Hungarian poetry together.

The Postcolonial Intersection

Another name for this diversity of national, ethnic, and religious identities represented in the journal might be heterogeneity, which became a motif in writings about Central Europe. It is no coincidence that the journal foregrounded its eclectic collection of differences precisely at a moment in the 1980s when postcolonial theorists began to rethink the relationship between hegemonic and subaltern cultures. *Cross Currents* was institutionally embedded in the North American academy, and many of its contributors were working in academic departments influenced by “the cultural turn” towards more relativistic and socially embedded readings of literature and history. A particularly dramatic encounter between Central European and postcolonial intellectuals will be discussed in Chapter Two; in this first look at the journal, it is simply the proximity of the discourses which motivates the comparison.

The contents of the first issue of *Cross Currents* show that this commitment to heterogeneity extends to form and genre as well. In addition to a mix of writings that came from different nations and focused on different historical moments—for example, Weintraub’s essay (perhaps the most subtle comment on contemporary Poland), Segal’s essay on Miłosz which

²² For the complete tables of contents of *Cross Currents*, see Labov (2004, appendix C).

focuses on the 1950s, Škvorecký on Hrabal, an essay on the early Rilke—the journal includes essays not just on literature but also on music, visual arts, theater, film, and sculpture. The form of the essays varies too, and includes a manifesto, a survey of poetry, interviews, feuilleton, a sociological study, and primary texts as well.

What role, then, does heterogeneity play within the individual essays, and how is this related to nationalism and postcolonialism? At one point in Antonín Liehm's "Conversation with Tadeusz Konwicki," Konwicki says: "*I come from the frontier*" (1982, 82; my emphasis). He is referring to Vilnius, Lithuania, his common point of origin with Miłosz, who often invokes the pluralistic past of that city and the diversity of people and cultures that coexisted there. Throughout this issue of *Cross Currents*, as well as the issues that followed it, one could trace a nostalgia for, or archeology of a lost pluralism—especially in cities like Vilnius, Prague, Vienna, Ljubljana, and (perhaps prophetically) Sarajevo. These multicultural urban nodes (see Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 2002) share a genealogy with certain historical figures that are reclaimed into a heterogeneous heritage: Kafka, Mickiewicz, and Musil; here Rilke, Bartók, and Canetti. To a certain degree, the "Prague of Kafka," the "Vienna of Musil," and the "Galicia of Schulz," as invoked by the reinventors of Central Europe, are fictional; there is no evidence in either the literature or historical accounts that Czechs, Germans, Jews, Austrians, and the other numerous ethnic groups of Austro-Hungary were integrated into a diverse, pluralist utopia. The Habsburg Empire does epitomize the ethnic complexity of the five major European powers of the nineteenth century. Regardless of the level of past integration, however, there can be no doubt that over the last two centuries, a series of ethnic cleansing and migrations (ranging from a general diaspora to Stalinist expulsions to outright genocide) has resulted in a lost heterogeneity throughout Central Europe. Yet this plurality is described in *Cross Currents* as a contemporary characteristic ("Diversity is a given," writes Konrád), albeit on an imagined plane.

One way to read this trend is as straightforward resistance to Central Europe's fragmentation into nationalisms. After all, if Bartók is both Hungarian and Slovak, then he is less useful as an example of Hungarian superiority to other cultures. Another benefit of such multilingual identi-

ties is that they lend themselves to translation. Canetti—born in Turkey to a Sephardic Jewish family, he spoke Ladino as a first language—is quoted as follows: “I feel at home only when, pencil in hand, I write down German words and everyone around me speaks English” (Seidler 1982, 108). Such a character moves with ease between boundaries of identity, and that fluidity is also applicable to the work of Central European writers circumscribed by the journal.

This dialectic between heterogeneity and nationalism has not been traditionally adopted in studies of nationalism in Eastern and Central Europe.²³ In Katherine Verdery’s work, for example, we see heterogeneity (in nationalist imagery) as a precursor to homogeneity. She writes: “For the project of nation-building, nonconforming elements must be first rendered visible, then assimilated or eliminated” (1993, 42). While this is an accurate description of past moments such as the end of Austro-Hungary or the rise of National Socialism, in which a heightened awareness of heterogeneity led to either assimilation or elimination, the rhetoric of diversity surrounding Central European discourse is much more celebratory. The inaugural issue of *Cross Currents*, for example, juxtaposes articles about Yugoslav theater and Polish film, but has few discussions of national difference. Skilling catalogs the various types of *samizdat* in Russia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, and suggests both political and cultural reasons for their distinct characteristics. Liehm and Konwicki discuss the Czech tendency towards surrealism and carefully controlled literary environments as opposed to Polish “bathos” and graphomania. Neither of these taxonomies fits Verdery’s description: the point of making these differences visible within the larger category of Central Europe is not to eliminate one in favor of the other. Instead, we have an advocacy of one unified region which can contain difference—almost any difference.

It would be a mistake, however, to discount imperialism as a factor in the creation of Central Europe. The presence of imperialism is the most

²³ There is no reason why theories about *nationalism* and Central Europe should be restricted here to the postcolonial, as this is a subject which has been thoroughly explored by historians and political scientists of Central Europe. Even Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983), one of the foundational texts of postcolonial theory, uses Central Europe as an example of the rise of linguistic nationalism.

obvious connection between the Central European project and the post-colonial stance.²⁴ Nowhere is this more explicit in this issue than in Finkelkraut's interview with Kundera, when Kundera refers to his country as "the Colonized West, a colonized form of Western Europe." Finkelkraut responds: "Colonized West: these are two words which I have in fact never seen joined. We have grown so accustomed to equating the West with Power, the West with Imperialism, that the concept of a colonized West is almost unthinkable for us" (Kundera 1982, 18).

Kundera's answer to Finkelkraut evokes the claims of postcolonial nations of the 1970s and 1980s: "[T]he West is also made up of little nations who have no reason to feel guilty for the crimes of larger countries and who have the right to defend their Western culture without remorse" (18). To complicate further the claim to both heterogeneity and nationalism, here Kundera demands that his country be seen as both Western (major) and colonized (minor). What he develops here is the idea that Central Europe contains a kernel of "true" Western culture not yet contaminated by the temptations of colonialism or imperialism. "*We have seen the most essential thing of all—the death throes of the West within our own countries before our own eyes,*" states Kundera (29; my emphasis). This concept can acquire a time lag, as well, as in Adam Zagajewski's premonition that Western Europeans could one day "tour" Eastern Europe to see a reflection of what the West used to be—a kind of fantasy of lost innocence (27). The other idea posited here is that Central Europe is indisputably central, because there is always something farther (and more dangerous) to the east.

In their foundational essays (re)published in *Cross Currents*, both Miłosz and Kundera attempt to reinhabit the idea of the public intellectual, a role they claim *can* still be inhabited in Central Europe, as opposed to in the West. Miłosz's idea of the public intellectual is rooted in the same French tradition that Miłosz claims "became a universal." Kundera also

²⁴ It should be noted here that the study of different historical periods is included under the rubric of postcolonial theory, and that the field is not strictly limited to the era after colonialism. Some of the most important work now considered under "postcolonial theory" (e.g., Fanon or Anderson) could be compared to Czesław Miłosz's *The Captive Mind*: in one sense, a postcommunist piece, because the author has left that state behind him, and in another sense a psychology of the subject of communism.

locates this idea in the West, dating back to the early stages of the Enlightenment, but alludes to a figure in the context he finds absent in the East: “In fact, totalitarian Russian civilization is the radical negation of the modern West, the West created four centuries ago at the dawn of the modern era: the era founded on the authority of the thinking, doubting individual, and on an artistic creation that expressed his uniqueness” (1984, 37). Leaving aside, for the moment, the question of Kundera’s attitude towards Russia, we can see that there is a critical connection to be made between the public intellectual, the political role that he or she plays, and the need for artistic autonomy.

In the introduction to their collection of essays, *Intellectuals in Politics* (1997), Jeremy Jennings and Tony Kemp-Welch provide a succinct and provocative history of the intellectual in the public sphere in the twentieth century. While listing figures such as those mentioned above, whom they recognize as historical precursors to the public intellectual, they place the origin of both the term and the role in the Dreyfus affair, based on the fact that “writers such as Émile Zola, André Gide, Marcel Proust, and Anatole France . . . were prepared to intervene in the public sphere of politics” (7). This idea of the intellectual who acts, or intervenes in the public sphere, corresponds with the definition of public intellectual as Miłosz and Kundera use it. Jennings and Kemp-Welch also distinguish the “intellectual” from the intelligentsia, a class living in opposition to an autocratic state in Russia. They draw Polish society into this alienated period between the Bolshevik and October Revolutions, presenting a “third way” described by Stanisław Brzozowski as an early expression of Gramsci’s organic intellectual (8). Again, the figure that Brzozowski describes is active: he steps forward and alleviates his sense of alienation by speaking on behalf of the working class.

When Julien Benda typologizes the intellectual, or *clerc* in his lexicon, he complains about contemporary men of letters who have become overly subject to national—or patriotic—passions, and have lost their autonomy. His models for *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (1928) are drawn from an earlier time as well. He finds the following precedents: “When Gerson entered the pulpit of Notre Dame to denounce the murderers of Louis d’Orléans; when Spinoza, at the peril of his life, went and wrote the words

‘Ultima barbarorum’ on the gate of those who had murdered the de Witts; when Voltaire fought for the Calas family; when Zola and Duclaux came forward to take part in a celebrated lawsuit (the Dreyfus affair); all these ‘clerks’ were carrying out their function as ‘clerks’ in the fullest and noblest manner” (1969, 50–51).

In a footnote, Benda notes that the key factor in any action of a *clerc*, even if it happens to be on behalf of his own race or nation, is that it “coincided at that time with the cause of abstract justice” (51). Those following Benda must similarly condemn intellectuals starting around 1890, who abandoned their position outside of all institutions to follow their “political passions” into discussions of race, class, and nationality. While Benda creates an exclusive definition, Gramsci, with his notion of the organic intellectual, is at the opposite all-inclusive extreme. Writing his *Prison Notebooks*, also in the late 1920s, Gramsci includes “everyone who works in any field connected either with the production or distribution of knowledge” (Said 1996, 9).

In a series of lectures on the subject in 1993, published in the 1994 volume *Representations of the Intellectual*, Edward Said revisits various definitions of the intellectual and categorizes Benda and Gramsci as representing two essential schools of thought on the subject. Said is much more sympathetic to Gramsci, but rescues the importance of the individual, who has a “specific public role in society that cannot be reduced simply to being a faceless professional” (11). Both Miłosz and Kundera situate themselves along the same axis, but would probably move away from Said and Gramsci toward Benda, to condemn those who have become accomplices to power; yet their vision of the Central European shares a lot with Said’s point of view:

The central fact for me is, I think, that the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. And this role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or

corporations, and whose raison d'être is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. The intellectual does so on the basis of universal principles. (11)

Perhaps the similarity can be attributed to the fact that Said derives his definition, in part, from the actions of Central European intellectuals. And his own experience inclined him to insist on the complex nature of the private and public aspects of the intellectual's role, how his own "personal inflection" and "private sensibility" inevitably become a part of the public persona.

If we continue with the genealogy of the public intellectual traced above, we find one emblematic—almost sacrosanct—text at its origin, the *Encyclopédie*. And while the word "intellectual" does not enter common usage until the late nineteenth century with the Dreyfus affair (Jennings and Kemp-Welch 1997, 7), there were certain groups of "thinking, doubting individuals" who received that title in retrospect. Among the earliest in the selective history of intellectuals acting in the public sphere, and the most important here, is the group surrounding Voltaire: Diderot, D'Alembert, and the other Encyclopedists. One might say that in a sense, from the point of view of content or form, *Cross Currents* is a continuation of the Enlightenment project of the Encyclopedists. We see evidence for this idea in Kundera's and Miłosz's claim that Central European culture has preserved the trajectory of the liberal humanist tradition which has been abandoned in the West. Should we read *Cross Currents*, then, as a descendent of the *Encyclopédie*?

The connection between our contemporary understanding of the intellectual, as Said and the Central European intellectuals understood the term, and original Encyclopedists might not be immediately obvious. We do not typically associate the author of an encyclopedia entry with someone "whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma." In fact, quite the opposite seems true: what could be more orthodox than an entry in an encyclopedia? Yet Said's description will resonate strongly with those familiar with the writing of *L'Encyclopédie* in the eighteenth century. The materialist and anticlerical views that Diderot, D'Alembert, and the other Encyclopedists infused into many of

the articles of *L'Encyclopédie* led to scandals, attempts by the Catholic Church to censor each new volume, and fostered an intrigued and loyal public.²⁵ We might also connect the encyclopedia and the essay as genres, since Diderot began technical research on *L'Encyclopédie* the same year that Montesquieu, known as “the father of the essay,” published his most famous work, *De l'esprit des loix* (1748). Although the encyclopedia obscures the individuality of the intellectual's voice with its anonymous entries, while the essay foregrounds that voice, both genres assert the authority of intellectuals to catalog and comment on the world around them.

***Cross Currents* as Essay and Encyclopedia**

If, on the other hand, we abandon what Theodor Adorno contemptuously calls the “royal road to origins,” we are led in a different direction, towards the “Essay as Form.” Adorno's well-known statement on the function of the essay in intellectual history allows us to see a different type of struggle for identity beneath the surface of this movement—that of the writers who have given themselves over to the task of representation, attempting to recover their aesthetic autonomy. In the last section of this chapter I will treat the essay as form, questioning the unmitigated identification of the writers with the subject of their writing. By grounding these concepts in a historical timeline, stretching from the project of the *Encyclopédie* to the twentieth-century inheritance and revision of Enlightenment ideals, this section will provide a genealogy and theoretical grounding for the many acts of writing across borders that populate the rest of the book. The writer repositioned as public intellectual is in a unique position relative to authority, audience, and above all genre.

²⁵ Several volumes were published outside of France to avoid violating a government decree of 1765 banning its publication, providing us with an early prototype for *tamizdat* publication, and a strange mirror of projects like *Cross Currents* in the twentieth century. See Darnton (1995) and Kind-Kovács and Labov (2014) for an extended discussion of the parallels between extraterritorial publishing in ancien régime France and twentieth-century Eastern Europe.

The essay as a genre is the mode of expression all the historical figures mentioned above used to reach beyond the role of writer to that of cultural or political actor. Each of the tens of thousands of entries in the *Encyclopédie* project can be read as essays; they attempt to define, categorize, and render the knowable world by including evidence from as many sources as possible, even when they are contradictory or flawed. This approach dates back to the origins of the essay. Michel Beaujour writes the following about Michel de Montaigne, who initiated this literary gesture in the late sixteenth century: “The deliberate disorder of Montaigne’s *Essays*, a disorder which disregarded both the accustomed procedures of topical invention and the decorum of composition, might be considered a transitional strategy, the negative and affirmative functions of which are implicit in the very word essay” (quoted in Kauffman 1981, 12).

From this deliberate and experimental indeterminacy emerges a clear voice that also contains some element of judgment.²⁶ Robert Lane Kauffman, in his 1981 dissertation on the theory of the essay, defines it as a “cognitive probe into some area of experience” (12). Along with the object under investigation, the identity and even personality of the essay writer forms a part of the reader’s frame of reference. This survived as a defining characteristic until the 1760s, when D’Alembert added the following entry to the *Encyclopédie*:

ESSAI, *Littérat.* Ce mot employé dans le titre de plusieurs ouvrages, a différentes acceptions; il se dit ou des ouvrages dans lesquels l’auteur traite ou effleure différens sujets, tels que les *essais de Montaigne*, ou des ouvrages dans lesquels l’auteur traite un sujet particulier, mais sans prétendre l’approfondir, ni l’épuiser, ni enfin le traiter en forme & avec tout le détail & toute la discussion que la matiere peut exiger. Un grand nombre d’ouvrages modernes portent le titre d’*essai*; est—ce modestie de

²⁶ “The word ‘essay’ derives from the medieval Latin word ‘exagium,’ meaning a ‘weighing,’ or, figuratively, a consideration or thoughtful judgment upon some matter. Montaigne used the term to mean a search, an investigation, a probing reflection or partial survey of something—but also a trial, test, or mental experiment” (Kauffman 1981, 13).

la part des auteurs? est—ce une justice qu'ils se rendent? C'est aux lecteurs à en juger.²⁷ (D'Alembert 2013, 982–83)

One commonplace about the essay that Kauffman is quick to dismiss, however, is that it is a byproduct of the birth of individualism. Following Beaujour again, Kauffman suggests that it might well be the other way around: “the individual, as discursive and cognitive subject, was as much the product as the producer of the rhetorical revolutions of the sixteenth century” (15). This view results in an inverted logic which would locate the origin of key figures in these movements within their respective texts: the *philosophe* as a product of the *Encyclopédie*; the Eastern European oppositionist as the product of a censored article; the Central European intellectual as a product of essays in *Cross Currents*.

In the remainder of this chapter, after a brief elaboration of Adorno's most important and relevant points in “The Essay on Form,” I will employ his main concepts in two foundational essays on Central Europe from *Cross Currents*, by Kundera and Danilo Kiš, to see how they are informed by an Adornian understanding of the essay. Kundera's concept of Central Europe, while diverse, is ultimately a unitary one; Kiš's is by contrast dialectical. While both build on aspects of marginality and otherness to constitute their respective myths of otherness, they do it from radically different subject positions, which reveal their distance from each other in relationship to power, politics, and the role of the public intellectual.

Adorno's writing on the essay and these definitions of the intellectual are linked to the encyclopedia because in Adorno's universe the essay *is* the action—it creates a kind of meaning or space which the writer can then inhabit. There are many goals and values embedded in it, but they are not of a strictly ideological kind; they function more like tropes, pre-

²⁷ “ESSAY, *Lit.* This word is used in the title of many works, with different applications. It can mean works in which the author treats or expounds on different subjects, such as *The Essays of Montaigne*, or works in which the author treats a particular subject, but with no pretense to deepen or to exhaust or to treat it completely in all the detail and with all discussion that the subject might demand. A great number of modern works carry the title of ‘essay’; is it modesty on the part of the authors? Is it justice that they serve? It is up to the reader to decide” (my translation).

serve space for interpretation, and ultimately distance between the subject and the object of the essay. It is tempting to read the essays of Kundera, Kiš, Miłosz, and other writers that appear in *Cross Currents* as strictly positivist descriptions of an object: this country is a part of the region, this one is not; Central Europe belongs to this cultural heritage, and not that one; or, Central Europe is everything which is not this or that. The following extended passage from Kundera's definition-driven project, or mini-*Encyclopédie*, "Sixty-Three Words," appears to be this sort of gesture:

CENTRAL EUROPE. Seventeenth century: The enormous force of the baroque imposes a certain cultural unity on the region, which is multinational and thus polycentric, with its shifting and indefinable boundaries. The lingering shadow of baroque Catholicism persists there into the eighteenth century: no Voltaire, no Fielding. In the hierarchy of the arts, music stands at the top. From Haydn on (and up through Schoenberg and Bartók) the center of gravity of European music is there. Nineteenth century: A few great poets, but no Flaubert; the Biedermeier spirit: the veil of the idyllic draped over the real. In the twentieth century, revolt. The greatest minds (Freud, the novelists) revalidate what for centuries was ill known and unknown: rational and demystifying lucidity; a sense of the real; the novel. Their revolt is the exact opposite of French modernism's, which is antirationalist, antirealist, lyrical (this will cause a good many misunderstandings). The pleiad of great Central European novelists: Kafka, Hasek, Musil, Broch, Gombrowicz: their aversion to romanticism; their love for the pre-Balzac novel and for the libertine spirit (Hermann Broch interpreting kitsch as a plot by monogamous puritanism against the Enlightenment); their mistrust of History and of the glorification of the future; their modernism, which has nothing to do with the avant-garde's illusions.

The destruction of the Habsburg Empire, and then, after 1945, Austria's cultural marginality and the political nonexistence of the other countries, make Central Europe a premonitory mirror showing the possible fate of all of Europe. Central Europe: a laboratory of twilight. (1988b, 1)

If we revisit these same words, however, as a part of Kundera's creative oeuvre—and given the essayistic, or even pedagogical quality of great expanses of his novels, this is not so farfetched—we can read them instead as an engagement with the abbreviated rhythm of speech and indicative sentences typical of encyclopedia entries. Kundera's definitions in "Sixty-Three Words" become self-reflexive, almost parodic meditations on the idea of defining such a vast concept in less than three hundred words. Adorno would have us simultaneously aware of both possibilities, and sensitive to the dialectic that operates between them—this is the action that Adorno calls negative dialectics.

Perhaps the first and most visceral characteristic of Adorno's writing on the essay is the level of personification involved. In Adorno's phrasing, the essay "wants," "needs," and "demands" a particular relationship with both its author and its reader. On the one hand, this is an intervention between the identification of the subject of the essay with its object, a relationship to be explored in more detail below; on the other, it underscores the autonomy of the essay as an aesthetic object. There are particular moments in "The Essay as Form" where there is a very clear emphasis on the essay as an active and animate force. In the following passage, Adorno explicitly names the essay's *kindlichen*, or childlikeness:

The essay, however, does not let its domain be prescribed for it. Instead of accomplishing something scientifically or creating something artistically, its efforts reflect the leisure of a childlike person who has no qualms about taking his inspiration from what others have done before him. ... Luck and play are essential to it. It starts not with Adam and Eve but with what it wants to talk about; it says what occurs to it in that context and stops when it feels finished rather than when there is nothing to say. Hence it is classified as a trivial endeavor.²⁸ (1991, 3)

²⁸ "Der Essay aber läßt sich sein Ressort nicht vorschreiben. Anstatt wissenschaftlich etwas zu leisten oder künstslerisch etwas zu schaffen, spiegelt noch seine Anstrengung die Muße des Kindlichen wider, der ohne Skrupel sich entflammt an dem, was andere schon getan haben. . . . Glück und Spiel sind ihm wesentlich. Er fängt nicht mit Adam und Eva an sondern mit dem, worüber er reden will; er sagt, was ihm daran aufgeht, bricht ab, wo er selber am Ende sich fühlt und nicht dort, wo kein Rest mehr bliebe: so Giorgio er unter den Allotria" (Adorno 1981, 10).

In the minor shift from “the essay” to “it” there is a slight tension introduced about the status of the object; whereas the first sentence describes characteristics of a literary form, the second opens up the possibility of luck and play being personal characteristics. This sense of ambiguity is of course even stronger in German, because the pronoun *ihm* is not neutral but masculine. Throughout this passage and many others, the essay appears as *er*, not “it,” and while this pronoun can certainly apply to inanimate objects as well as animate, Adorno’s use of the foreign noun *der Essay* instead of *die Abhandlung*, *der Aufsatz*, or *der Versuch* imports a slight self-consciousness to the use of the pronoun *er* which might not be present with a more native referent.

At the end of this passage another force enters the picture, one which classifies the essay as unimportant or trivial. This opposition between the personified essay and the organizing principle it resists is present throughout “The Essay as Form.” From its opening sentence—“That in Germany the essay is condemned as a hybrid, that the form has no compelling tradition, that its emphatic demands are met only intermittently, all this has been said, and censured, often enough.”²⁹ (3)—to its closing—“Hence the essay’s innermost formal law is heresy. Through violations of the orthodoxy of thought, something in the object becomes visible which it is orthodoxy’s secret and objective aim to keep invisible.”³⁰ (23)—Adorno works to reveal the dialectic inherent in the genre, and the reader is drawn into an ongoing struggle that takes many different forms. It is interesting to note that two words, “hybrid” and “heresy,” bookend the essay, invoking an ideological context for this struggle. Unlike the previous example, however, where the German text carried a stronger sense of personification than the English, here the English word “hybrid” for *Mischprodukt* speaks more of people than things, and carries a heavier political analogy in translation than it does in the original. To “condemn” or “decry” a

²⁹ “Daß der Essay in Deutschland als Mischprodukt verrufen ist; daß es an überzeugender Tradition der Form gebricht; daß man ihrem nach drücklichen Anspruch nur intermittierend genügte, wurde oft genug festgestellt und gerügt” (Adorno 1981, 9).

³⁰ “Darum ist das innerste Formgesetz des Essays die Ketzerei. An der Sache wird durch Verstoß gegen die Orthodoxie des Gedankens sichtbar, was unsichtbar zu halten insgeheim deren objektiven Zweck ausmacht” (Adorno 1981, 33).

hybrid in Germany, particularly one lacking in tradition, strongly suggests the condemnation of a person of mixed race; a *Mischprodukt* is simply a mixed product, and if anything invokes a collage or composite substance. The closing lines, on the other hand, personify the opposing force (orthodoxy) more strongly than the essay itself.

Whereas the example of “hybrid” for *Mischprodukt* might be easily ascribed to the language gap, and function simply as a marker of what is inevitably lost in translation, there are more visible fingerprints on another famous passage of characterization, also found early on in the essay. Here, Adorno is describing the act of interpretation as a form of resistance:

Out of fear of negativity, the subject’s efforts to penetrate what hides behind the façade under the name of objectivity are branded as irrelevant. It’s much simpler than that, we are told. The person who interprets instead of accepting what is given and classifying it is marked with the yellow star of one who squanders his intelligence in impotent speculation, reading things in where there is nothing to interpret. A man with his feet on the ground or a man with his head in the clouds—those are the alternatives. But letting oneself be terrorized by the prohibition against saying more than was meant right then and there means complying with the false conception that people and things harbor concerning themselves.³¹ (4)

It is only necessary here to point to the impact that this passage, as an explicit reference to Nazi policies toward Jews, has on Adorno’s writing as a whole. Between the condemnation of the hybrid, the branding of an intellectual with a yellow star, and the potential subjugation to terror, the

³¹ “Die Anstrengung des Subjekts, zu durchdringen, was als Objektivität hinter der Fassade sich versteckt, wird als müßig gebrandmarkt: aus Angst vor Negativität überhaupt. Alles sei viel einfacher. Dem, der duettet, anstatt hinzunehmen und einzuordnen, wird der gelbe Fleck dessen angeheftet, der kraftlos, mit fehlgeleiteter Intelligenz spintisiere und hineinlege, wo es nichts auszulegen gibt. Tatsachenmensch oder Luftmensch, das ist die Alternative. Hat man aber einmal sich terrorisieren lassen vom Verbot, mehr zu meinen als an Ort und Stelle gemeint war, so willfahrt man bereits der falschen Intention, wie sie Menschen und Dinge von sich selber hegen” (Adorno 1981, 10). Bob Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will translate “gelbe Fleck” as “yellow stain” (Adorno 1984, 152).

totalitarian texture present in the background of Adorno's writing becomes a veritable soundstage.

In Adorno's words, the "gelbe Fleck" is linked to "der kraftlos, mit fehlgeleiteter Intelligenz spintisiere und hineinlege, wo es nichts auszulegen gibt." Literally translated, the "yellow stain" is equated with "strengthlessness, with a misled intelligence musing and put into that from where there is nothing to explicate." The fact that this personified essay is portrayed by Adorno as a cosmopolitan Jew, first "marked with the yellow star" and then engaged in resistance to a repressive order, is impossible to ignore. The subject—the essay writer—is being branded with these characteristics by an outside force, but in the original it is the object, the "Fleck," which carries the meaning, and the reader is not made complicit in this branding by (grammatically) transferring those characteristics to the subject. I would argue that rather than reducing Adorno's meaning to a simple political analogy, the two translations of "gelbe Fleck" as "yellow star" and the ensuing slippage from object to subject compel us to question more stridently the confusion of the subject and object of its interpretation, and to recover more urgently the aesthetic autonomy of the essay form.

In the context of Transatlantic Central Europe, what is at stake here is unearthing an implicit political and aesthetic stance which is "branded" on the subject position of the essay writer. Because Kundera, for example, writes on behalf of Central Europe and speaks as a public intellectual following in the tradition of the Encyclopedists, the position from which he writes becomes identified with this region (he is now "Central European" in addition to Czech), and the political goal of separating the region from Eastern Europe becomes an added filter through which everything he writes must now be read. Adorno's writing can be projected into the middle of this dynamic, as he argues that the form of the essay resists such a classification. Furthermore, the interpretive stance of the essay demands a *distance*, and not a conflation, of the subject writing the essay and the object under investigation.

As we will see in Chapter Two, in a close reading of "The Tragedy of Central Europe," Kundera "embraces" Jewish culture in a self-conscious gesture in which he marks himself with the yellow stain before it can be assigned to him. He is engaged in an act of overinterpretation (of Central

European culture as inherently Jewish, Kundera as Central European, and therefore Kundera as Jewish); following Adorno here, this would mean that he has refused to let himself be “terrorized” by the convention of remaining within the literal, biographical meaning of Kundera as non-Jewish. By ascribing Jewishness to Central Europe, Kundera introduces that necessary distance between himself as a subject and the object of his essay. What appears to be at first a strict classification (these countries are Central European, this culture is Central European) turns out instead to be a paradox which escapes classification (this culture exists, this culture is Jewish, but there are no Jews in Central Europe). In Adorno, we might see this as “[the essay’s] weakness bear[ing] witness to the very nonidentity it had to express. . . . In the emphatic essay thought divests itself of the traditional idea of truth” (1991, 11). For Kundera, Jewish culture is figured as the “intellectual cement” that binds the region together.

Halfway through its twelve-year run, *Cross Currents* published an encyclopedic essay by Kiš that retroactively catalogs past gestures to define the region and anticipates where the movement is going next. It is also the best illustration of how Adorno’s theory can be fully expressed in Central European terms, and how a writer can successfully suspend himself between the subject writing the essay and the object under investigation. By comparing Adorno’s and Kiš’s essays, we can find strong intertextual resonances between the concept of Central Europe and Adorno’s concept of the essay.

The encyclopedic effect of Kiš’s essay is extreme. It is comprised of thirty-eight paragraphs, each numbered individually, and reads as a series of aphoristic statements (variations) on one theme, as opposed to one coherent argument. Kiš begins his theme and variations on an intensely ambiguous note.³² This is the entirety of paragraph one: “With no precise borders, with no Center or rather with several centers, ‘Central Europe’ looks today more and more like the dragon of Alca in the second book of Anatole France’s *Penguin Island* to which the Symbolist movement was compared: no one who claimed to have seen it could say what it looked

³² In this search for a center, we might also recognize the opening statement of *Cross Currents* 1, of Miłosz’s “Looking for a Center,” to be analyzed in Chapter Two.

like” (1987, 1). The paragraphs that follow are all variations of a definition of Central Europe. Paragraph two likewise describes Central Europe as a concept without borders, and “since Yalta and Helsinki we can speak of this only in the past tense, or the pluperfect” (1). Whereas the first definition suggests an impossible vision, the second suggests an impossible linguistic time. Furthermore, Kiš claims in this section that “to speak today about Central Europe as a homogeneous geopolitical and cultural phenomenon entails risks” (1).

In the third variation, Kiš claims that “the differences between the diverse national cultures of this part of the world are more important than their similarities,” and states, furthermore, that the only points of convergence are located in the distant past (1). What follows, however, is an extended list of those points of convergence that exist “only” in the past. And perhaps it is at this point, towards the end of the first page of the essay, that the reader begins to suspect that the essayist is wandering a bit far from the point—perhaps even contradicting himself. With each entry, we as readers are receiving more and more “evidence” which one must discount in order to dismiss the possibility of a coherent Central European culture. In other words, Kiš is speaking in the ironic mode described by Lukács and carried forward into Adorno’s understanding of the essay: he is holding forth on two points of view at once, one of which substantively undermines the other. Another way of understanding this might be the process of negative dialectics—the formal correlative of the essay—being set in motion.

In “The Essay as Form,” Adorno is quite clear that the essay is not a “closed inductive or deductive structure” (10), that “it is radical . . . in its accentuation of the partial against the total, in its fragmentary character” (9), and that it rebels against the idea that “what is transient and ephemeral is unworthy of philosophy” (10).³³

The essay recoils from the violence in the dogma according to which the result of the process of abstraction, the concept, which, in contrast to the

³³ For the remainder of this chapter, all citations from Adorno will be taken from Weber NicholSEN’s 1991 translation.

individual it grasps, is temporally invariant, should be granted ontological dignity. ... Even the constructs of fantasy, presumably free of time and space, refer, if derivatively, to individual existence. This is why the essay refuses to be intimidated by the depraved profundity according to which truth and history are incompatible and opposed to one another. ... The relationship to experience ... is the relationship to all history. ... Hence the essay challenges the notion that what has been produced historically is not a fit object of theory. (10)

In this context, a concept such as the dragon of Alca carries the same weight as Kakania: the vision Musil shared with Broch, Karl Kraus, Josef Roth, and Miroslav Krleža, of an “imperial, royal creation (*K. und K.*) [which was] a ‘phantom’ even during its existence” (Kiš 1987, 2). For Kiš, geographical facts are similarly up for debate, as Vienna is now forcibly divorced from “her former colonized allies, whether annexed or ‘natural,’ and Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, and Bucharest are [culturally] closer today to Moscow than to Vienna” (2).

By insisting on the heterogeneity of truths about Central Europe, as well as the heterogeneity of people and cultures within the region, Kiš avoids the trap that Kundera falls into with his antagonism towards Dostoyevsky. Kiš is all too aware of the “danger” of speaking about “a homogeneous geopolitical and cultural phenomenon”; this is the violence of abstraction that Adorno cautions against. A little further on, in the twelfth variation, Kiš ventures a greater risk: “From the vantage point of the present we can speak about the Viennese Circle without being afraid of making dangerous generalizations” (1987, 5).

The fragmentary nature of Kiš’s variations, like Adorno’s essay, rejects the demand for continuity—for a totalizing system. In Adorno’s formulation, the essay “thinks” concepts in the same antisystemic way: “unceremoniously, ‘immediately,’ just as it receives them” (1991, 12). This will ultimately result in a different relationship between language and concept. He writes:

In actuality, all concepts are already implicitly concretized through the language in which they stand. The essay starts with these meanings, and,

being essentially language itself, takes them farther; it wants to help language in relation to its concepts, to take them in reflection as they have been named unreflectingly in language. ... The manner of expression is to salvage the precision sacrificed when definition is omitted, without betraying the subject matter to the arbitrariness of conceptual meanings decreed once and for all. (12)

In Kiš, we see this process enacted with every negative, non-definition. They are inevitably followed by other non-definitions, until, eventually, a precise picture comes into focus. We find a typical non-definition of another troublesome and dangerous concept, Judaism, in paragraph twenty-eight (following is the entire entry):

In a letter to his father, Kafka wrote about Judaism: "I did not see anything better to do with such material than to liberate oneself of it as quickly as possible; this liberation seemed the most pious of acts to me." Despite the strength of conviction that rings in this declaration, Kafka stayed on the path of renunciation a very short time. "The Jew," says Sartre, "is a man whom other men take to be Jewish. ... His life is only a long escape from other people and from himself." (1987, 11)

This is not the only variation on the Jewish theme of Central Europe, but it is also meant to stand on its own; the variations should be read, I would argue, as prose poems, or, to invoke a slightly risky musical analogy here, as an independent improvisation on a well-known tune. What is at stake here is not just the challenging of received or stale ideas but a strategy, or anti-method methodology, by which to challenge orthodoxy.

In his closing statement on the essay, in relation to Nietzsche's single moment of affirmation, Adorno invokes the idea of heresy (*Ketzerei*): "Even the highest manifestations of the spirit, which express this [Nietzschean] happiness, are always also guilty of obstructing happiness as long as they remain spirit. Hence the essay's innermost formal law is heresy. Through violations of the orthodoxy of thought, something in the object becomes visible which it is orthodoxy's secret and objective aim to keep invisible" (1991, 23). Kiš's strategies carefully carry out heretical projects on

every piece of the utopic vision of Central Europe—from peaceful multi-ethnic coexistence, to Jewish intellectual cement, to the nostalgia for Austro-Hungary. At the same time, the larger fact of Central Europe as a coherent entity (which is itself a heresy) grows. With every “myth” he debunks, he brings more circumstantial facts to light, until the accumulation of individual experiences, hallucinations, and fantasies overcomes any orthodoxy about Central Europe as a singular, coherent entity.

Adorno uses two major analogies to describe the non-structure of the essay: the carpet (*Teppichhaft*) and the constellation. Both are Benjaminian in nature, and serve to work these definitions concretized in language (like that of the Jew) into a larger semantic picture, like that used by “someone in a foreign country who is forced to speak its language instead of piecing it together out of its elements according to rules learned in schools.” Adorno is quick to point out this is a profoundly fallible method, but one which “becomes true in its progress” (1991, 13). We meet the trope of the “constellation” in other imaginings of Central Europe, specifically Cornis-Pope’s constellation of multicultural urban nodes; in Chapter Three we see a constellation of Hungarian literary journals in emigration. But nowhere is this image presented as clearly as in Kiš’s arrangement of related yet distinct variations. They are not just interwoven in their references and rhythms—this is the carpet—but they support each other, or “bear each other up” (*einander tragen*) (Adorno 1991, 13). Their meaning becomes clear only in relation to each other. The best example of this, which will also lead us to Adorno’s last and overarching point, can be found in Kiš’s last three paragraphs, which I reproduce here in their entirety:

36

Exile, that is only the collective name for all the forms of *alienation*, is the last act of a drama, the drama of “non-authenticity.” The writer of Central Europe has stood for a long time between two kinds of reductionism: ideological and nationalistic. After a long period of temptation, he will understand that he cannot find the ideals of the “open society” in either one sphere or the other that constitute the only choice open to him. He will ultimately discover his only legitimacy in language and in literature, that “strange and mysterious consolation” Kafka speaks

of. A dangerous and liberating attachment, a “leap beyond the level of murderers.” But this choice cannot be made without perplexity: no one can place himself outside the community without remorse. To bet on eternity is just as vain as to bet on the present instant. From this comes the permanent sense of “non-authenticity.”

37

The argument of Marthe Robert that the K. of Kafka is not just his own initial—it is not only that but also the impossibility of revealing himself—seems to me to apply to other cases than that of Kafka. This single letter, masking and suggesting, is a sign that can be applied to all writers of Central Europe. This K. is the eternal ambivalence.

38

If I say that *the awareness of form* is a characteristic shared by all writers from Central Europe, form as a desire to give meaning to life and to metaphysical ambiguity, form as *possibility of choice*, form that is an attempt to locate points of fulcrum like those of Archimedes in the chaos around us, form that is opposed to the disorders of barbarism and to the irrational arbitrariness of instincts, I am afraid I have only generalized my own intellectual and literary obsessions. (1987, 13–14; emphasis in original)

This is how Kiš’s essay ends, from a wandering series of digressions on language (from Orwell to Nabokov to paragraph thirty-six on exile and alienation above), to a bold claim about one single letter, K., which could be applied to all the writers of Central Europe (and what does this say about individual identity?), to an equally striking series of shared characteristics, which are then radically negated by an avowal of the author’s own subjectivity. This is nothing less than complete subjugation to Adorno’s demand for nonidentity—to the separation of subject and object. In his rehearsal and dismissal of Descartes’s four rules, Adorno gently disassembles the trope of the cognitive subject who uses the essay as a tool to discover some larger, scientific truth. The first rule, of a *clara et distincta perceptio* (clear and distinct perception) governing the process of thought and conceptualization, is challenged through the anti-method

methodology enacted by the essay—by its very process. We have already seen some of the other ways that the partial or fragmentary truth stands in place of a whole, or totalizing concept. What Kiš demonstrates in the conclusion of “Variations” is that “the essay does not in fact come to a conclusion and displays its own inability to do so as a parody of its own a priori” (Adorno 1991, 17).

Kiš does exactly what Kundera does not do in his definition of Central Europe, which is to dissociate himself as a subject from the object of his investigation, and put into question the very assumptions brought about by his own biography and experience of history. Kiš also proves Adorno correct: at the moment of disengagement and negation of the subject, the object—Central Europe—is at its most clear. It has emerged through indistinct and contradictory fragments, and its concepts (such as that of “K.”) have been concretized through language, made to generate meaning through their interaction with other concretized concepts (non-authenticity, the desire to give form in the midst of concepts). If *Cross Currents* strives to provide a large “supplement” or encyclopedia to the existing body of knowledge about Central Europe, and to distinguish itself in the process from other, rival concepts, Kiš has provided us with a prototype of how one might go about this project. This is, then, the solution: to read *Cross Currents* as not just a yearbook, but as an encyclopedia of Central European culture, to encounter each new writer, artist, or intellectual as an “entry.” The form of encyclopedia implies a representation in which the sum of knowledge about these entries is greater than the idea as a whole, which is not unlike the representation of the intellectual. In Chapter Two, I will look more closely at Kundera’s refutation of his past positions, such as those on Central Europe or Dostoyevsky, and at his refusal to incorporate them into his current identity as a writer. Where he was once engaged in a very prominent and effective cultural polemic on this topic, he now distances himself from the vast majority of his past work, claiming that it is “too political.” This may indicate that he felt he could not sustain a position simultaneously as a writer and a public intellectual. In the following chapter, I suggest that the conflict arose because Kundera locates himself as a writing subject too close to the object of his essay.

The Debate over Central Europe—From Jews to Yugoslavia

The Domains of Central Europe

Every invention and reinvention of Central Europe implies a different geography and a different set of inclusions or exclusions. From the late 1970s to the early 2000s, writers and essayists from the region proposed many different, rival geographies, each linked to a slightly different political or cultural profile. As discussed in the previous chapter, some proponents of Central Europe in the 1980s and early 1990s invoked Jewish culture as the “spiritual glue” that held this region together. After the first wave of interest in the region among US and other Western intellectuals and politicians, one of the most contentious points of disagreement among Central Europeans was the place of Southeastern European countries within the region of Central Europe. The difficulty in incorporating countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania within the concept of Central Europe was perhaps due in part to their radically separate political cultures. In this chapter, I will tackle questions of identity, politics, and geography raised by two important works addressing the region in that period, Larry Wolff’s *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994) and Maria Todorova’s *Imagining the Balkans* (1997). Finally, I will explore how the destruction of Yugoslavia and Yugoslavism led to the collapse of the idea of Central Europe developed in the previous decade, and how this anticipated the failures of liberalism in the region as a whole.

The word “domain” can be traced back to medieval Europe and has a different set of meanings than those derived from the words “kingdom” or “Reich”: the domain is first and foremost about “lordship, ownership,

property,” in other words a power which is exercised via the control of territory.³⁴ The other terms are more specifically about empire in a political sense, as the embodiment of a king or ruler. The proponents of Central Europe in the 1980s drew directly on previous imaginings and conceptions of the domain from the Baltic to the Black Seas, at times simply to distance themselves from the nationalist movements of the nineteenth century, but at other times with a great sense of nostalgia. Therefore, earlier demarcations of dominion, such as the medieval kingdoms that incorporated both rivals and allies into control of large amounts of territory, serve as proof of concept for those who would like to imagine Central Europe as a multiethnic, multilingual, heterogeneous zone of habitation. The following section will provide a history of Central Europe as a concept and as this type of domain, from its earliest incarnation through the mid-twentieth-century historians who were the direct antecedents to the writers of the 1980s.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the Jagiellonian dynasty, or *domain*, was often described as stretching *od morza do morza* (“from sea to sea”—that is, from the Baltic to the Black Sea). Even today, the phrase in Polish carries echoes of a long-lost Polish imperialism. Greater Hungary once contained “the lands of St. István” (Hungary, Slovakia, Transylvania, Croatia, and the Banat), and the Hungarian Kingdom existed as a more or less continuous political entity from the early modern period all the way through Habsburg rule. Furthermore, a domain in the sense I am claiming can also be a zone of habitation: for example, the progression from the sixteenth-century to the nineteenth-century Pale of Jewish Settlement. In Central Europe, the nineteenth-century shift from domain to nationhood as the primary political unit came with two ideas that supported an argument for territorial consolidation. First, the redrawing of boundaries after the First World War created ethnic remainders—linguistically defined pockets isolated from the mainstream culture—because almost all these so-called “nations” had exceeded the borders that they were granted by Versailles in some earlier instance of kingdom, empire, or

³⁴ See the full definition and etymology in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which dates the word to the fifteenth century.

domain. In some cases, the pocket was abandoned in favor of a defensible border, and forgotten; in other cases it was mythologized, fetishized by nationalists or pastoralists looking for a true national past while building a case for irredentism. The second, less commonly visited idea, argued that throughout the region there are cultural memories of larger, supranational entities, multiethnic and coexistent realms not necessarily identified with the organization created by imperial conquest. Both these ideas fed into the repeated imaginings of Central Europe, and contained a strong thread of nostalgia. As Svetlana Boym has noted, the idea of nostalgia can be used in the service of aggressive nationalism (as Milošević and Karadžić did), but it also retains a paralyzing, passive character: “Nostalgia tries to slow down time, to resist progress” (2001, 19).

In the mid-nineteenth century, the region in question was the crossroads of four empires: the Prussian and Tsarist Empires dividing up the North, Austro-Hungary in the center, and the Ottoman Empire in the South. One of the earliest visions of a coherent region, *Mitteleuropa*, is a pan-Germanic one. Pockets of German settlement have been one of the defining features of Western Slavdom since the twelve and fourteenth centuries. Religious and commercial settlers went eastward and established strong German-speaking and German-trading communities (for example, along the Volga River, around Białystok), at times incentivized by policies such as the invitation of King Václav II (1278–1305) to German protestants to come to Bohemia and counter the growing power of the Catholic Czech nobility.³⁵ The slow but steady expansion of cross-cultural trade led to the Germanization of towns and cities in provinces such as Moravia and Silesia from the fifteenth century onwards.

In his 1994 study of the concept of *Mitteleuropa*, Jacques Le Rider suggests that this series of migrations without any larger intent or design were reunderstood in the nineteenth century as having a “systematic imperial *Drang nach Osten*” (quoted in Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 2002, 3). In modern times, Le Rider suggests, the idea of *Mitteleuropa* rose in significance whenever German culture experienced a crisis in its geopolitical

³⁵ Leonard Scales notes that it was not in fact Václav II “but his consort, the pious *Theutonica virgo* Guta of Habsburg,” who intervened on behalf of the German minority (1999, 341).

identity—that is, “after the Thirty Years’ War, after Napoleon’s invasion, and after the creation of a German Reich in 1871” (3). Friedrich Naumann (1860–1919), now seen as one of the forefathers of German liberalism, rose to prominence as an advocate of Mitteleuropa at such a historical moment. Educated as a Lutheran minister, Naumann’s 1915 treatise outlining an idealist pan-Germanism described a league of sovereign nations working in economic harmony in the wake of the First World War. “Within a year, the book sold more than 100,000 copies and became Germany’s greatest best seller after Bismarck’s *Memoirs*” (4). This vision was fundamentally misguided; Naumann had no real concept of the striving for self-determination that surrounded him, as many of the possible candidates for his Mitteleuropa were on the cusp of independence from imperial rule.

The vision of Mitteleuropa promoted by Austrian intellectuals of the early twentieth century was a slightly different one, which argued more for a shared cultural heritage between Austria and Bavaria that could solder the two German-speaking political entities into peaceful coexistence. Hugo von Hofmannsthal was one of the main proponents of this idea, which was politically identified with the Metternich family. The Salzburg Festival was founded in the 1920s as an expression of this artistic and intellectual “gentle hegemony.” The Anschluss of Austria by Germany in 1938 must have come as quite a shock to the writers and musicians living in that internal exile; they were the inheritors of a blindness to disintegration and failure that is so exquisitely described in Robert Musil’s *The Man without Qualities*—in that case, the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire a generation earlier.

The next iteration of the idea of the great “Central European experiment” was the establishment of Yugoslavia in May–July, 1917. Dalmatian Croat leader Ante Trumbić and Serb Prime Minister Nikola Pašić signed a pact, under political pressure from larger states, that brought into being the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in Belgrade in December 1918 (Banac 1984, 115). The United States was the first great power to recognize the new state, but other international actors questioned its legitimacy until Communist rule was established after the Second World War. While of a different lexical root than the other “Central Europes,” the ideals behind Yugoslavism are conceptually similar, and the utopic implications

of its existence would become very important to the proponents of Central Europe. The connection between the two will be explored in greater length at the end of this chapter.

Another interesting intranational union of this era was the brainchild of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia and a philosopher in the Czech humanist tradition. His *Střední Evropa* was derived in part from the mid-nineteenth-century writings of František Palacký, who described the Czech lands as a bridge between Roman, German, and Slav elements in Europe, a protector of small lands trapped between Pan-German and Pan-Russian aggression. Masaryk's principles for union were practical and multilingual, a veritable extension of the agreement he forged at Versailles to produce the Czechoslovak state. It is probably the most far-reaching geographically of the Central Europes imagined: "peculiar zone of small nations extending from the North Cape to Cape Matapan including Laplanders, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Finns, Estonians, Letts, Lithuanians, Poles, Lusatians, Czechs, Slovaks, Magyars, Serbo-Croats and Slovenes, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Turks, and Greeks, but no Germans or Austrians" (Timothy Garton Ash, quoted in Todorova 1997, 150). Masaryk's career as a politician is hauntingly similar to Havel's in its successes and failures; politically and culturally, post-Versailles Central Europe looked a lot like postsocialist Central Europe. The individual nations in Central Europe were just as preoccupied then as they are today with stabilizing their economies, enacting land reform, writing and rewriting constitutions, and answering international pressures about "minority populations." If we compare those two moments (post-Versailles and postsocialist), they stand out from the periods of dominion and empire when these nations and/or peoples have been grouped together forcefully by a single ruling power.

Many historians from Central Europe went into exile just after the Second World War and wrote in very similar ways, from an anti-Soviet perspective, about the region they called East-Central Europe. R. W. Seton-Watson continued his work from before the war, in line with Masaryk's ideals (1967). Francis Dvornik wrote on the Byzantine Empire and medieval Central Europe, but extended his field of study up until the nineteenth century for the sake of stretching his point (1949). Oskar

Halecki primarily studied the early modern period, but wrote several textbooks for American students that implied that East-Central Europe was an inherent part of Western Europe (1950, 1952, 1966). Hungarian historian Jenő Szűcs continued this historiographical argument in 1983 with his essay on “The Three Historical Regions of Europe,” and reintroduced István Bibó’s 1946 work *The Poverty of the Small States of Eastern Europe* to a wider audience.³⁶

Larry Wolff’s Invented Eastern Europe

As Wolff illustrated in his seminal 1994 study *Inventing Eastern Europe*, Eastern Europe has always been a defensive concept, a way for the West to divide what is European from what is not. Although Cold War discourse fixed on Eastern Europe to define the sphere of Soviet influence, Wolff places the concept’s origin two hundred years earlier: “It was Western Europe that invented Eastern Europe as its complementary other half in the eighteenth century, the age of Enlightenment. It was also the Enlightenment, with its intellectual centers in Western Europe, that cultivated and appropriated to itself the new notion of ‘civilization,’ an eighteenth-century neologism, and civilization discovered its complement, within the same continent, in shadowed lands of backwardness, even barbarism. Such was the invention of Eastern Europe” (1994, 4). Wolff demonstrates that during the eighteenth century the concept of “civilized” Europe shifted from the North–South axis defined by the scholars of the Italian Renaissance (periodically under attack from “barbaric” soldiers from France and the Holy Roman Empire) to an East–West axis: “[I]t was the intellectual work of the Enlightenment to bring about that modern reorientation of the continent which produced Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Poland and Russia would be mentally detached from Sweden and Denmark, and associated instead with Hungary and Bohemia, the Balkan lands of Ottoman Europe, and even the Crimea on the Black Sea” (5). This mirrored

³⁶ Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer provide a useful schematization of these ideas in their ACLS Occasional Paper *Towards a History of the Literary Cultures in East-Central Europe* (2002).

a shift in the economic and cultural centers of power from the south of Europe to the Western capitals profiting most from colonial endeavors: Paris, London, and Amsterdam. Wolff sees this as a very active displacement of both barbarism and backwardness from North to East, and one that remains with us: “we have passively inherited the Europe that they actively reconceived” (5). Wolff’s study can be seen as an extension of Edward Said’s work on Orientalism, both in its nature and in its grounding in texts similar to those examined by Said, including factual and imagined travel literature and other “philosophical geographies.” Wolff invokes Said at a crucial point in his argument, calling the Western study of Eastern Europe a “demi-Orientalism” (7), and notes that both discourses are inextricably bound to the political conquest of the same territory.³⁷

Throughout his study, Wolff emphasizes that Eastern Europe serves as more than a demarcation of the backwards and barbaric from the progressive and civilized: it functions rather as a scale which can be held up to measure the relative progress of the West. The countries of Eastern Europe are figured at various points on this scale, depending on the narrator and the audience. As a result, we have an example of “nesting Orientalisms,” where the Crimea serves as a marker of Easternness beyond Warsaw, Saint Petersburg, and Moscow.³⁸ By containing all the potentially irresolvable contradictions of the region—fruitful commerce and culture on the one hand, and Asiatic languages and Muslim practices on the other—travelers’ descriptions and encounters of Crimea bring its most utopic and dangerously impenetrable features to the surface.

At the culmination of “Mapping Eastern Europe,” the chapter at the very heart of Wolff’s argument, we find Eastern Europe as it was invented by the Encyclopedists. After a thorough treatment of the attempts to map

³⁷ “France’s eighteenth-century experts on Eastern Europe ended up in Napoleon’s regime and academy, and the Enlightenment’s discovery of Eastern Europe soon pointed the way to conquest and domination. Napoleon’s creation of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw in 1807, his annexation of the Adriatic provinces of Illyria in 1809, and finally his invasion of Russia in 1812 put *Philosophic Geography* at the service of military mapping” (8).

³⁸ Ségur was in fact traveling as a part of Catherine the Great’s entourage as she visited Crimea for the first time since its annexation. Wolff demonstrates that this proved to be a spectacle for travelers and natives alike (128).

Eastern Europe cartographically, Wolff provides a reading of each *Encyclopédie* entry on a country from the region: “The lands of Eastern Europe, generally stipulated as geographical subjects, were scattered alphabetically throughout the seventeen volumes of text, but, taken together, those articles constituted the state of enlightened knowledge about Eastern Europe in the middle of the century” (183). Although the *Encyclopédie* itself is the work of over 140 authors, and Diderot and D’Alembert are usually cited as its chief progenitors, it is worth noting that Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, contributed the greatest number of articles, including the entries on Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Tartary discussed in Wolff’s text.³⁹ Much of his analysis of these entries points to their mythic, inventive qualities. Wolff makes three basic points: the physical location of these countries corresponds to a geographical determinism; certain features are exaggerated and others dismissed because of their resonance in contemporary French debates (e.g., his emphasis on Poland’s republicanism and his dismissal of devout Catholicism as superstitious); for every civilized aspect of Eastern Europe there is a “savage” or “barbaric” counter aspect. Therefore, “Jaucourt’s article on the persistent barbarism of the Tartars in Volume XV was the necessary complement to his article on the developing civilization of the Russians in Volume XIV” (191). Through this careful balancing act, Wolff sketches out his larger point about the *philosophes* and their relationship to the concept of Eastern Europe.

The cultural construction that Wolff describes is fundamentally unstable. Geographical determinism demands consistent borders. The linguistic resemblances and overlapping ethnic populations of these lands seem to suggest a continuity where political history does not allow one. In Voltaire’s writings on Charles XII, Peter, and Catherine, and in Jaucourt’s entries in the *Encyclopédie*, Wolff sees “such enthusiastic scrambling of the subject that one hesitates to say whether the invention of Eastern Europe was really a matter of scrambling or of unscrambling. . . . The idea of Eastern Europe never attained the ‘otherness’ of the Orient, but its parts were made to cohere within a system of related characteris-

³⁹ Although the authorial tallies have certainly come under dispute, and there exist many sources for these numbers, it seems only fitting to consult the French Wikipedia entry “Collaborateurs de *L’Encyclopédie* (1751–1772).”

tics, imitating the principles of the taxonomic tables of Linnaeus. Yet the stability of such systematic coherence was inevitably undermined by overlapping influences from either side” (358). In the midst of all of this uncertainty, Wolff adds that Voltaire was also trying to forge a consequential political role for the philosopher engaged in this act of defining. One of the key factors in the self-definition of (non-Eastern) Europe as civilized and progressive was the “aspiration of philosophy to political power” (361). By achieving the persona of what we would term today a public intellectual, Voltaire was embodying an Enlightenment ideal, and influencing the shape of governments and geographies with the force of empiricism and scientific argument. The convergence of geography, philosophy, and diplomacy gave birth to the concepts of East and West as we know them today.

Here we can compare Wolff’s Eastern Europe with the reinvention of Central Europe in the 1980s. Did the Central European intellectuals challenge the delineation of Europe into East and West, or did they just shift the boundary farther to the east? The Central European movement constituted a challenge to Enlightenment ideals on the one hand, but also a continuation of its attempt to give a systemic coherence to the region despite shifting borders and slippery identifications. Miłosz, Kundera, Škvorecký, Konrád, Kiš, and their contemporaries aspired to the same marriage of philosophy, politics, and literature that Voltaire sought. In the following section, I will explore these questions further by examining two essays by Miłosz and Kundera that we can consider as urtexts of the Central European movement.

Divergent Definitions of Central Europe: Miłosz and Kundera

Czesław Miłosz: “Looking for a Center”

Miłosz’s keynote lecture at the East European Festival at Michigan, “Looking for a Center: On the Poetry of Central Europe,” which opened the first volume of *Cross Currents*, plays a foundational role in the

movement to reinvent Central Europe. Miłosz presents, essentially, an essay on Polish poetry, but says he is confident that “students of Czech or Hungarian or Baltic literatures will easily find analogies” (1982, 1). Miłosz’s vision of Central Europe does not feature a great inclusion of Southeastern Europe. He locates the coordinates of his subject, first in space, then in time. He combines Europe’s East–West axis with its North–South axis—“the Eastern marches of Rome-centered Christendom” (1)—as well as the possibility of different temporal turning points for the continent—“The seventeenth century . . . gradually moved the cultural center of continental Europe from Rome to Paris” (2). Invoking Rome as a past center implies that the idea of a center is a malleable one, that centers can move; at the same time, it underscores a dividing line Miłosz places in his account, between “Rome-centered Christendom” and Byzantium. This no doubt accounts for what Todorova registers in Miłosz’s essays as ambiguity toward Russia, and by extension towards non-Catholic Southeastern Europe. For example, his claim that “similarities among poets of the Renaissance, whether French or Polish or Croatian, were due to their common models taken from Italy” (3), while a challenge to an East–West paradigm of cultural dispersion, belies a fundamentally Catholic genealogy in Miłosz’s poetic history.

At the same time, a few more subtle aspects of “Looking for a Center” provide clues to the symbolic position that Yugoslavia will come to hold for Miłosz and other Central European intellectuals. For starters, Miłosz is so precise about his own spatial and temporal genealogy that the center he eventually defines has the character of an idiosyncratic self-portrait rather than a normative delineation which others should follow. The essay might be read as a methodological model: how to arrive at one’s own Central Europe. Second, his simultaneous attachment to and suspicion of the “lost French universal” (also discussed in the previous chapter as a link to the original project of the Encyclopedists) foreshadows his ambiguous relationship to the role of the public intellectual. In fact, in this aspect of “Looking for a Center” we might say that Miłosz anticipates the exchange with Joseph Brodsky at the 1988 Lisbon Conference discussed later in this chapter. Already in the initial stages of his advocacy for Central Europe, Miłosz senses the limitation placed on a poet acting as public intellectual,

of being understood primarily as a representative of either the French universal ideal or of the challenge mounted against it, as Brodsky and his colleagues were understood as representing Russian ideals, regardless of their individual views as artists.

In the final paragraph of the essay, Miłosz cautions against the dangers of nationalism: “Standing on one’s own feet, liberating oneself from the vestiges of unhappy love for the West is a good thing, provided it doesn’t lead to entrenching oneself in a morbid nationalism. An East-Central Europe composed of closed national compartments hostile or indifferent to each other would be against the vital interests of its nations” (11). Given that the Central European myth usually invokes the brief interwar period as a model for independence from foreign domination, Miłosz could just as easily be referring to the dangerous nationalisms that developed in the 1930s as a caution against national conflicts on the horizon for Central Europe. His suggested remedy: “a clear understanding of the past” (11), of a shared cultural regional identity. Creating a space for such a shared identity is the initial motivation to found *Cross Currents*, and provides a rationale for everything that appears in the journal over the twelve years that followed. The very form of the journal, with its compulsive inclusion of diverse disciplines, nationalities, media, and *historical time periods*, is presented as a kind of panacea against nationalist, homogenizing forces. Throughout the 1980s, articles on the cultural production of Yugoslavia still treat it as a manifestation of such antinationalist ideals. Following Miłosz, the splintering of Yugoslavia into “morbid nationalisms” will betray the very foundations of the Central European movement.

Milan Kundera: “The Tragedy of Central Europe”

In addition to positioning Central Europe as the last Christian frontier against the external “other” of Byzantine Russia, writers like Kundera thematize the identity of the region as united through the presence of an internal “other,” Judaism, perhaps to adopt its minority-culture status. As we saw in the discussion of Adorno’s “gelbe Fleck” (yellow stain/yellow star) in Chapter One, Kundera’s position is a strategic one, a way to

emblemize Central Europeans as a “chosen people” who have had to live on the margins of hegemonic domains. In this sense, Jewish identity functions differently than other minority presences in the writings about Central Europe. Some writers like Kundera adopt it as an inherent part of being a Central European intellectual, whether or not the author in question is of Jewish origin.

One way of considering the internalized identity of the Jewish “other” is as a natural result of an impulse to remember and to memorialize that is frustrated by the Soviet-style revision of personal, regional, and national histories. Here, the problematics of memorializing the Holocaust stand in for a more general anxiety about memory. The desire to uncover a lost pluralism also turns the project of Central Europe into an archaeological endeavor. In the work of several writers on Central Europe we are presented with “evidence” of the layer of Jewish civilization lying just under the surface of Central European culture: Jewish artifacts and ruins produced by an artistic archaeology (see Figs. 2 and 3). They present the ghostly traces of places legible as religious sites, but no longer functioning as such. The fourth issue of *Cross Currents* continued this archaeology, devoting almost the entire volume to the question of Jewish identity within and alongside a Central European one (see Figs. 4, 5, 6, and 7). While Jewish identity—borrowed or otherwise—complicates the subaltern status of the Central European exile, it also helps to stabilize the dynamic between metropole and nation-state, center and periphery.

More specifically, the exile adopts a Jewish intellectual heritage in a move away from direct representation of the individual nation-states of Central Europe. Instead, in this guise the exile represents a continuation of at least three motifs of Jewish cultural mythology: the wandering Jew, the borderless “small nation par excellence,” and the intellectual who was already in a form of internal exile within Central Europe. As shown in the illustrations in *Cross Currents*, some relics do remain of the Jewish presence in the region, and they are photographed and collected by both locals and visitors out of a desire to preserve and protect these traces. Therefore, the different strata of Jewish heritage and memorialization unearthed in the artistic archaeological projects in *Cross Currents* do more than just symbolize a lost heterogeneity. This ghostly identity also links the Central



Figure 2. Illustration in *Cross Currents* 1 (1982), a synagogue in ruins. (Courtesy of Michigan Slavic Publications.)



Figure 3. Illustration in *Cross Currents* 1 (1982), a synagogue in ruins (detail). (Courtesy of Michigan Slavic Publications.)

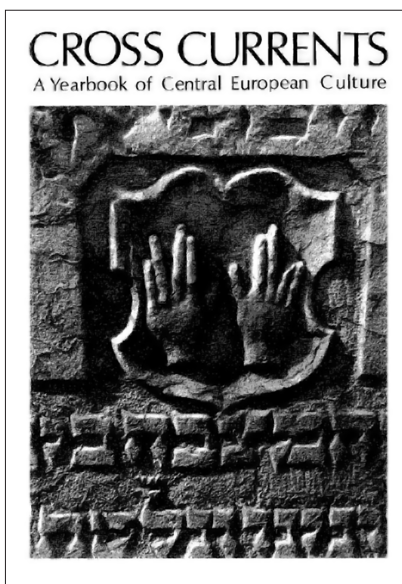


Figure 4. Front cover of *Cross Currents* 4 (1985), "From the Old Jewish Cemetery." (Photo by Jan Lukas. Courtesy of Michigan Slavic Publications.)



Figure 5. Illustration in *Cross Currents* 4 (1985), "From the Old Prague Cemetery." (Photo by Jan Lukas. Courtesy of Michigan Slavic Publications.)

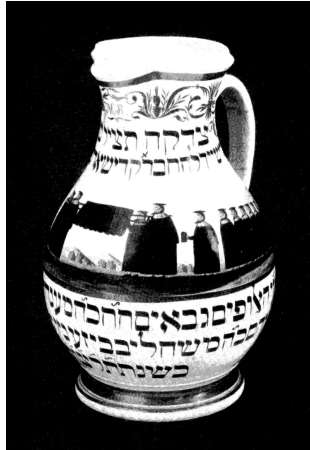


Figure 6. Illustration in *Cross Currents 4* (1985), Burial Society pitcher. (Courtesy of Michigan Slavic Publications.)

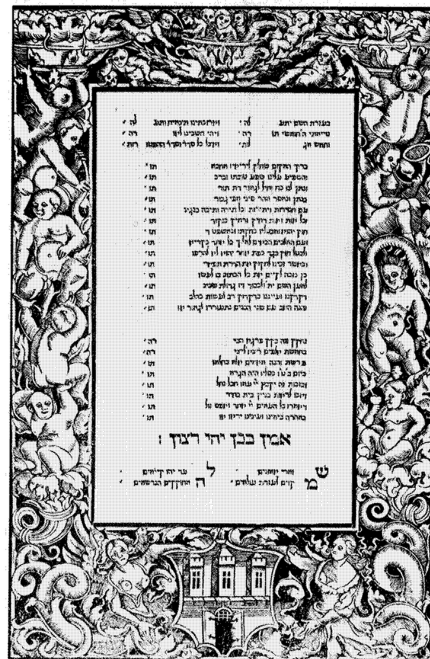


Figure 7. Illustration in *Cross Currents 4* (1985), a page from the Prague Pentateuch (1530). (Courtesy of Michigan Slavic Publications.)

European intellectual to a past that has been cut off by the double-edged sword of the Holocaust and Soviet historical revision. It is quite simply the glue that holds the entire concept together.

The influence of Kundera's essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe," published in the *New York Review of Books* in April 1984, stems from his excellent reading of late Cold War politics, and his subsequent success in drawing some international attention to the revival of Central Europe. The title refers to an earlier version of Stephen Borsody's history of Central Europe, *The New Central Europe* (1962, 1993). The "tragedy" of Central Europe that Kundera articulates begins with arguments, similar to Borsody's, about the political situation and the lost potential of the Central European countries after the Second World War. Kundera refuses to delineate specific geographic boundaries,⁴⁰ but the countries he mentions most often are the same three Miłosz writes about: Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. His overriding insistence that Central Europe "belongs" to the West, that it contains something that Europe itself has lost touch with, the anti-Russian sentiments, and the isolation and untouchability of countries still behind the Iron Curtain, are all factors that combine to produce a new final frontier to be explored, discovered, and perhaps even offered on the literary marketplace. These are the aspects Todorova focuses on in her treatment of the essay, and they are the ones most often discussed. But for the purposes of this chapter, my interest in Kundera's short text lies elsewhere.

In the essay, after Kundera makes his major historical and political arguments, and after his diatribe against the stereotype of "the Slavic soul," he lists the different cultural moments of Central Europe that have become important, or memorable, to Western Europe: Vienna at the turn of the century; interwar Prague and Krakow; Charles University in the fourteenth century; the Hungarian Renaissance; the experience of nineteenth-century national struggles and the poets that led them; the advent of Zionism. These are "the great common experiences that reassemble peoples, regroup them in ever new ways along the imaginary and ever-changing boundaries

⁴⁰ "It would be senseless to try to draw its borders exactly. Central Europe is not a state: it is a culture or a fate. Its borders are imaginary and must be drawn and redrawn with each new historical situation" (Kundera 1984, 35).

that mark a realm inhabited by the same memories” (Kundera 1984, 35). The following paragraph, the opening of section seven, reads as follows:

Sigmund Freud’s parents came from Poland, but young Sigmund spent his childhood in Moravia, in present-day Czechoslovakia. Edmund Husserl and Gustav Mahler also spent their childhoods there. The Viennese novelist Joseph Roth had his roots in Poland. The great Czech poet Julius Zeyer was born in Prague to a German-speaking family; it was his own choice to become Czech. The mother tongue of Hermann Kafka, on the other hand, was Czech, while his son Franz took up German. The key figure in the Hungarian revolt of 1956, Tibor Déry, came from a German-Hungarian family, and my dear friend Danilo Kiš, the excellent novelist, is Hungario-Yugoslav. What a tangle of national destinies among even the most representative figures of each country! (35)

Working his way from north to south, Kundera produces great cultural figures with hybrid identities that challenge our attempts to assign them nationalities. This is an illustration of the “common experiences” and “ever-changing boundaries” described above, and it seems at first glance to be a straightforward appeal to pluralism, diversity, multiculturalism—values that appeal to the Western audience as much as anti-Russian ones do. But in the midst of this tangle of identity politics there is a hidden marker, which Kundera reveals in the next sentence.

And all of the names I’ve just mentioned are those of Jews. Indeed, no other part of the world has been so deeply marked by the influence of Jewish genius. Aliens everywhere and everywhere at home, lifted above national quarrels, the Jews in the twentieth century were the principal cosmopolitan, integrating element in Central Europe: they were its intellectual cement, a condensed version of its spirit, creators of its spiritual unity. That’s why I love the Jewish heritage and cling to it with as much passion and nostalgia as if it were my own. (35)

Here lies the second meaning of “tragedy” in the title: with the loss of Jewish people and culture, Kundera believes that the “intellectual cement” and

unity has been removed from the concept of Central Europe. The lists serve as a kind of mortar, and remind us not only of the contributions Central Europeans have made to the Western canon but how interconnected those contributions are. This narrative is another version of Miłosz's panacea of historical understanding to heal the rifts of fragmentary nationalism. And once the glue is in place, Kundera goes on to discuss the dilemma of the "small nation" (exemplified by the Jewish people).

In a case like that of *Cross Currents*, the multinational approach to creating a culture from the diaspora has the potential to produce a fragmented, seemingly haphazard selection of literary texts, especially when including Austrian or German authors from the other side of the Iron Curtain. Matejka, in line with Miłosz's vision, sets the journal in the past as well as the present, using articles about the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the Jagiellonian dynasty to dissolve contemporary borders and boundaries. He also illustrates Kundera's thesis and incorporates much of the region's "lost Jewish heritage" as a bridge between nations and across centuries.

As discussed in Chapter One, Kundera's essay refers to *Cross Currents* in a footnote in section seven, after the discussion of small nations and the relevance of their problems to Europe in general.⁴¹ In placing the reference here, Kundera suggests that coming to terms with the loss of Jewish culture as a binder for regional identity might not necessarily happen in Central Europe itself, and that *Cross Currents* is one example of the form that a new cohesion might take. The task of finding suitable replacements for the "great cultural figures" of the past is no longer just a Central European problem, Kundera argues further: it is a question for all Europeans.⁴² This is another dimension of the preoccupation with the loss of a humanistic intellectual tradition that carried out its business in a sphere separate from politics, even if that business concerned politics. Part of the problem in the West, Kundera diagnoses in section ten, is the mass media, "which, for the French and Americans, are indistinguishable from whatever the

⁴¹ This was the only mention of the journal in the *New York Review of Books*, according to my interview with Matejka.

⁴² "Europe hasn't noticed the disappearance of its cultural home because Europe no longer perceives its unity as a cultural unity. In fact, what is European unity based on?" (36).

West is meant to be” (Kundera 1984, 37).. He argues that at least in the postwar revolts in Central Europe there remained a link between politics and culture, enacted by means that Kundera enumerates in another list: “[the resistance to communism] was prepared, shaped, realized by novels, poetry, theater, cinema, historiography, literary reviews, popular comedy and cabaret, philosophical discussions—that is, by culture” (37). Following this thought all the way through to another footnote, a symptom of Kundera trying to contain his digressions, we find a list within the list of cultural products:

By reviews I mean periodicals (monthly, fortnightly, or weekly) run not by journalists but by people of culture (writers, art critics, scholars, philosophers, musicians); they deal with cultural questions and comment on social events from the cultural point of view [here Kundera lists no less than seven such journals in the German, Russian, French, and then Polish contexts]. The disappearance of such reviews from Western public life or the fact that they have become completely marginal is, in my opinion, a sign that “culture is bowing out.” (37n15)

Kundera goes on to describe his arrival in Paris after the 1968 invasion of Prague, his shock at the liquidation of this literary culture, and his eventual realization that there was no analogue for this aspect of Czech culture in France. The following footnote cites the Czech literary weekly *Literární noviny* as a further example, and mentions the numerous underground publications circulating in 1980s Poland.

In this tenth section of the essay, which on first reading might be dismissed as simple cultural nostalgia on Kundera’s part, he embeds an explanation, or even a justification, for the appearance of *Cross Currents* two years prior. Between the earlier footnote, which mentions *Cross Currents* as something of value or “relevance” for Westerners seeking a common cultural heritage in the region, and the digressive footnotes in section ten, which insist on the specificity and importance of the literary press in postwar Central Europe, there is another vision—a way out of the tragic tone that dominates the essay as a whole. In *Cross Currents*, one might expect to find a recuperation of the “cultural point of view” that

would also comment on social events.⁴³ One of the purposes of such a journal would be to locate or even produce Kundera's great cultural figures (hereafter referred to as "intellectuals") that have disappeared from the European landscape. If we consider the shared origin of the essay and the encyclopedia as archetypal expressions of Enlightenment thought, it is clear that they both assert the authority of intellectuals to either catalog or comment on the world around them. The claim to this authority, even against the will of a legal or spiritual higher power, is novel to both genres, and establishes a historical connection between them still visible today.

This does not necessarily mean that Kundera and Miłosz are advocating a return to the Enlightenment ambition of pure rationalism, or that they would like to rewrite themselves as *les nouveaux philosophes*. The nostalgic impulse in these two Central European intellectuals is countered by their revision of the typologizing project, nicely summarized by Said's description of the task of the intellectual in Chapter One: "to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug" (1996, 11). The charge to speak on behalf of those without a voice is not new to the definition of an intellectual—Voltaire has been retrospectively defined as a "public intellectual" because of his willingness to intervene in the affair of the Calas family by speaking out on their behalf (Benda 1969, 50). The difference here is that in *The Representation of the Intellectual*, Said assumes that there is a group identity or a group of individuals that the intellectual needs to stand in for. The challenge for the writer coming from Central Europe is that he or she is both constructing a new, multivalent identity that transcends nation and language, and at the same time attempting to speak in its name. This is how Jewishness—particularly a secular, assimilated Jewishness that articulates itself in the many different languages of Central Europe—proves so useful as a layer of that identity.

⁴³ One key difference between the diaspora journals Kundera mentions, such as the émigré publication *Kultura* based in Paris, and the new model for regional integration that he holds up *Cross Currents* to represent, is that his examples are based on one national literature, and written in that literature's language. *Cross Currents* is derived from this model, but contains texts from throughout the region and uses the English language as a meeting point, as did other contemporary publications in the West devoted to history and political science, such as *East European Reporter* and *East European Politics & Society*.

Kundera uses Jews as a synecdoche for all that is marginalized, displaced, but also profoundly intellectual about his vision of Central Europe.

Flight from Byzantium: Kundera vs. Brodsky on Dostoyevsky

If the Jewish culture signifies for Kundera what is marginalized within Central Europe, labeled above an “internal Other,” Russian culture works at the other extreme: it is a negative definition of what it means to be Central European and, by extension, European. Although Kundera’s anti-Soviet and anti-Russian prejudices are quite clear in “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” he magnifies what he sees as the essential and inherent difference in identity between the two civilizations in “An Introduction to a Variation: Diderot or Dostoyevsky.” Kundera’s piece was originally written as the introduction to his play *Jacques and His Master*, later reprinted in the *New York Review of Books*.⁴⁴ Joseph Brodsky’s response, “Why Milan Kundera Is Wrong about Dostoyevsky,” was published later in 1985 in *NYRB*. In *Cross Currents* 5 (1986), Matejka republished this famous exchange between Kundera and Brodsky, but made a deliberate decision to “construct around them a broader forum of opinion on the question, drawing on the writings of other eminent spokesmen, thus casting the ‘polyphony’ of the controversy into high relief” (454). Thus what was once a bitter polemical volley between two strong-willed émigrés becomes, in the pages of *Cross Currents*, something like a briskly curated intellectual exchange. Matejka opens the section with a chapter on Dostoyevsky from T. G. Masaryk’s little-known book *The Spirit of Russia* (not published until 1967). This is followed by the two essays by Kundera and Brodsky, a piece by the Czech comparatist Václav Černý on “Dostoyevsky and His Devils,” and finally, “Dostoyevsky and His Western Intellectuals,” an essay where Miłosz weighs in on the debate. All these contributions discuss the purported “Slavic soul,” as well as Dostoyevsky’s work, historical context,

⁴⁴ The play was originally written in Czech, published in French in 1981, and then translated into English by Michael Henry Heim in 1985.

biography, and the failures of the West.⁴⁵ This type of redaction is what makes *Cross Currents* such a vital part of the *transatlantic* Central Europe: Matejka forges a conversation that takes place between and among émigrés and those at home, across the interwar and postwar eras, across national lines and oceans and back again.

Kundera's introduction to the play *Jacques and His Master*, which was subtitled "An Homage to Diderot in Three Acts," opens with a gesture reminiscent of Wolff's eighteenth-century cartographers, diplomats, and philosophers. Why Diderot? Kundera asks, semi-rhetorically. Because he is not Dostoyevsky. The opening of his essay defines Diderot—and the French Enlightenment, the spirit "of reason and doubt, of play and the relatively of human affairs," and all that is Western to Kundera—in the negative space left by the imprint of Russian civilization on Czech culture (1986, 470). Although the bulk of the essay is occupied with a discussion of Diderot as a novelist, it is framed by the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia ("my small country"), and a proposal by a Czech director that Kundera adapt Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* for the stage. His reaction is "an inexplicable pang of nostalgia for 'Jacques le Fataliste'" (469). The nostalgia here is expressly symptomatic: it announces a state of physical or temporal separation from the world of Dostoyevsky. Kundera's play, as he narrates it, comes to life as an attempt to recover from that loss. This anecdote is numbered "1." The subsequent sections 2–10 are variations on this anecdote:

2

Why this sudden aversion to Dostoyevsky?

Was it the anti-Russian reflex of a Czech traumatized by the occupation of his country? No, because I never stopped loving Chekhov.

⁴⁵ Kiš's "Variations on the Theme of Central Europe" (analyzed at the end of Chapter One) was originally a short paper for presentation at a 1986 conference held in Ann Arbor by the University of Michigan's Center for East European Studies on "Politics and the Intellectuals in Central Europe." It was clearly meant as a response to Kundera, if not Brodsky, Miłosz, and everyone else who had weighed in on the debate. It was reprinted as the first piece in *Cross Currents* 6 (1987), and continues just where the last volume left off; because of the yearbook format, it seems almost as if Kiš has written an immediate response.

Was it doubts about the aesthetic value of his work? No, because my aversion had taken me by surprise and made no claims to objectivity.

What irritated me about Dostoyevsky was the *climate* of his novels: a universe where everything turns into feeling; in other words, where feelings are promoted to the rank of value and truth. (469)

This is the beginning of a larger point that layers an epistemological schism on top of the political and geographic one. In another anecdote about an encounter with a Russian soldier in the Czech countryside, Kundera again dramatizes a confrontation with his occupier, this time in a face-to-face encounter instead of in the pages of a book. His distaste here is later echoed in his description of “the noisy and empty sentimentality” of the Slavic soul in “The Tragedy of Central Europe.” What is even more striking in Kundera’s introduction to the play is how the essay maps a personal experience onto an aesthetic one, and then politicizes the entire framework: “Faced with the eternity of the Russian night, I had experienced in Prague the violent end of Western culture such as it was conceived at the dawn of the modern age, based on the individual and his reason, on pluralism of thought and on tolerance. In a small Western country I experienced the end of the West. That was the grand farewell” (476).

In his essay “Sixty-three Words” from *The Art of the Novel* (1988) Kundera further embraces the uncertainties and heteropolar definitions of Central Europe. As Wolff would have it, the region itself demands that. In the clash of civilizations he lays out here, Kundera enacts Wolff’s gesture of the West defining itself through the East, as well as Adorno’s conflation of the subject with the object of its analysis. This can be a fruitful moment to revisit some earlier questions, namely: did the Central European intellectuals challenge the delineation of Europe into East and West, or did they just shift the boundary farther to the east? Is this a retrenchment of the Encyclopédiste position “on the individual and reason, on pluralism of thought and tolerance,” or does it challenge the limits of liberal thought? In the strictest sense, Kundera falls right into line behind Diderot—on the one hand, classifying, and on the other hand, exploding those classifications. He places Czech culture in the West and Russian culture in the East, but refuses to allow these judgments to stand as an objective, empirical

truth—rather locating them within his own sensibilities and affective relationship with politics and literature.

Brodsky's initial response can be seen as an illustration of Adorno's critique of the essay as form. He notes that Kundera as the essayist has gone too far in aligning his political and aesthetic views:

[T]he preferences put forth by Mr. Kundera appear to be based not so much on his aesthetics as on his sense of history.

Now, with history, one is on more solid, if not entirely firm, ground. . . . Yet it slips from under one's feet if one accords it the responsibility for one's aesthetics. By doing so, one subordinates art to the strictures of creed, a philosophical system, the interests of a group—ultimately, an ideology. . . .

One of the worst things that can happen to an artist is to perceive himself as the owner of his art, and art as his tool. (1986, 477)

One way of reading this passage is that Brodsky claims that Kundera has confused himself as the subject of history with the subject of the essay; as a result he has lost his independent judgment, and the distance necessary to see clearly the object of his essay. The eventual implications of Adorno's critique for those writing about Central Europe are present here, in the difference between speaking in the voice of dissent against the totalizing forces of history, and allowing that voice to determine one's aesthetic judgment. The writer who does that, Brodsky claims, is no better off than the writer who advocates for the doctrine of socialist realism.

Brodsky's other major rebuttal of Kundera's aversion to Dostoyevsky and "the Slavic soul" speaks to Wolff's intellectual history:

Then he inveighs against incoherence of feeling and, after noting what feeling has cost our civilization, comes to extol its opposite, rational thought and the spirit of reason and doubt, locating them squarely in the West. The realm where feelings are "considered values in themselves, criteria of truth, justifications for kinds of behavior" lies, roughly, in the direction of his pointed finger, from which both Dostoyevsky and the tanks have come. . . .

Well, it's not true; at least, it's not as neat as that. The atrocities that were and are committed in that realm, were and are committed not in the name of love but of necessity—and a historical one at that. The concept of historical necessity is the product of rational thought and arrived in Russia by the Western route. . . .

The political system that put Mr. Kundera out of commission is as much a product of Western rationalism as it is of Eastern emotional radicalism. In short, on seeing a Russian tank in the street, there is every reason to think of Diderot. (479)

Here Brodsky objects to Kundera's "philosophical geography," and continues along the lines of a major trajectory of Wolff's argument, which begins in the correspondence between Voltaire and Catherine the Great. Seen from the West, Wolff claims, Eastern Europe "appeared an ideal domain for enlightened monarchy, inasmuch as despotism was displaced to a reassuring distance, and the philosophes could contribute their opinions and advice, even, in the case of Diderot, a 'plan of civilization'" (1994, 359). Brodsky's finger points more directly to Marx and the idea of historical determinism as imported from Germany, to prefigure the East as the laboratory for Western self-realization in the eighteenth-century bifurcation of the continent.

Nowhere is this more evident in the twentieth century than at a key moment of confrontation between Central European intellectuals and their Russian counterparts at the end of the Cold War. Throughout the remainder of the 1980s, conversations about the West and East coincided with the gradual political deconstruction of the boundary between them. However, this did not happen in any predictable or easily digestible way, and there were very different zones of participation and contact between Eastern and Western actors. In the last chapter of her book *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, Susan Buck-Morss describes her exchanges and collaborations in 1987–1990 with Russian scholars Valerii Podoroga and Mikhail Ryklin from Moscow's Institute of Philosophy, culminating in a series of meetings between critical theorists from East and West (2000, 214–29). One of the most fascinating aspects of her account is the role that émigrés play in mediating the conversation—particularly between Western Marx-

ists and their counterparts from the recently socialist world. Buck-Morss is still only aware of this bipartite division, however, between those on one or the other side of the Iron Curtain. In the late 1980s, there was another palpable gulf between those writers in satellite countries who were in more and more frequent dialogue with émigrés and other figures in the West, and those in the Soviet Union. In the next section, I will use the transcript of a writers' conference held in Lisbon in 1988, a particular encounter between Russian, Central European, and self-described postcolonial writers, to show the contrast between these different zones, and how the debate over competing "philosophical geographies" leads to a thorough cross-examination of identity by all involved.

The Lisbon Conference: May 7–8, 1988

Although the political-literary journal *Cross Currents* served as a virtual coffeehouse for some émigrés, fostering dialogue through letters, reviews, and transatlantic debates, it is important to acknowledge the impact of face-to-face meetings of Central European writers and intellectuals living in the West. International conferences, symposia, and writers' retreats forced questions of nationality and identity on people who would generally prefer to avoid such labels.⁴⁶ Meetings of this kind also allowed circles of colleagues and friends to widen and intersect, sometimes leading to new ideas and collaborations, sometimes leading to personality clashes, literary interrogations, and even political challenges. The meeting in Lisbon was unusually emotionally charged for a writers' conference, and quickly sensationalized in the US and Western European press as a symptom of internal unrest in the Soviet Union (e.g., the article "Soviet Bloc Writers Clash at a Conference" in the *New York Times* [Delaney 1988]). In fact, what took place on May 7–8, 1988, at the Queluz Palace might be better understood as a highly performative act of cultural translation, from one literary milieu to another, concerned more with the

⁴⁶ Dubravka Ugrešić's 1988 novel *Fording the Stream of Consciousness* offers an entertaining and satiric view of this phenomenon.

role of the writer in relation to politics and history than with any one political position.

The Lisbon Conference was the third in a series of international writers' conferences sponsored by the Wheatland Foundation; the fourth was the most well-known meeting of them all, in Budapest, 1989. The series began in 1987, with two Wheatland-sponsored events: one in Vienna, a conference on the theme of "exile" covering several geographic areas but focusing on those isolated by the Iron Curtain; and a meeting in Washington, DC, between several Russian writers still living in the Soviet Union with others living in exile.⁴⁷ The meeting in Washington was portrayed by the Wheatland Foundation as a kind of literary summit (in line with the political rhetoric of the Reagan–Gorbachev era), but public perception aside, those in attendance felt it was a true milestone in forging new East–West ties among writers. When a different group of Soviet and émigré writers—Lev Anninsky, Joseph Brodsky, Sergei Dovlatov, Anatoly Kim, Grant Matvosian, Tatiana Tolstaya, and Zinovy Zinik—met a year later at the "Roundtable of Russian Writers" in Lisbon, the ability to have internal and external Russian exiles speaking face-to-face was still somewhat novel. We often focus on 1989 as an *annus mirabilis*, and associate all of the shock waves of the East–West exposure with that year. But there were small provocations of this kind, often the result of orchestrated cultural events, much earlier, and they intensified throughout the second half of the 1980s.

These moments of East–West diffusion reflected the collapse of both a physical and a temporal divide. Zinovy Zinik, a writer who had been living in emigration for thirteen years, described the meeting in Lisbon as follows:

I've written six novels set in the West with flashbacks to Moscow, where I was born. Yet, I am absolutely unknown. I don't exist in Moscow but for a few people such as Tatiana [Tolstaya] and some other friends who have heard about me. . . . I was touched by Anatoly Kim's personal story. When he was eight, his family was deported from the Far East to Central Asia. It

⁴⁷ The proceedings of the 1987 Wheatland meeting in Washington, DC, can be found in Glad 1990.

is like being forced from Wales to the Sahara Desert, really. He grew up in a situation similar to that of an émigré. He spoke a different language when he came to Moscow. His situation was not that different from mine when I came to London, unable to speak a word of English. For us to meet here is a moving experience. Until a year ago it was much easier for a Soviet citizen to become a cosmonaut and fly to the moon than to come to London. The fact that I am able to talk to Anatoly Kim here and now is a kind of miracle.⁴⁸ (“The Lisbon Conference” 1990, 104–5)

The participants of the “Roundtable of Central European Writers,” however, were in Lisbon to continue an entirely different conversation, one that had begun at least a decade earlier. The stated goal of this roundtable was to determine the status of Central European literature—whether certain characteristics could be found in common in the work of writers from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Albania, and whether that “literature” could be distinguished from Russian, or Soviet literature. Sitting on the panel were: Jan Błoński, Czesław Miłosz, Jan Józef Szczepański, Krzysztof Michalski, and Adam Zagajewski from Poland; Péter Esterházy and György Konrád from Hungary; Josef Škvorecký from Czechoslovakia⁴⁹; Danilo Kiš, Ivan Lalić, and Veno Taufer from Yugoslavia; and Ismael Kadare from Albania. It is worth noting that this selection of writers, like that of Soviet writers in Washington, also included a mix of those who lived in their native countries and those who had emigrated. But by then, this juxtaposition was no longer novel to those involved in the Central European debate. The representatives of the region were once again all men, demonstrating that for all of their subscription to multicultural and inclusive beliefs, the Central European project did not think to include women in its self-definition.

Although most of the presenters had prepared papers for this conference, moderator Michael Scammell decided to summarize the contents of the papers himself, and then open up the floor for a response from each writer and a general discussion. As a result, the views of writers who

⁴⁸ All subsequent citations refer to the transcript of the two sessions of the Lisbon Conference, as published in *Cross Currents*.

⁴⁹ Ivan Klíma and Bohumil Hrabal sent papers, but were not able to obtain visas.

throughout the 1980s had argued both for and against the idea of Central Europe, who often disagreed amongst themselves over where the region's borders might be and what historical conditions might define it, were presented as a coherent synthesis, as planks of a single Central European platform. According to Scammell's narrative, with the failure of the Marxist utopia, the "holders of power . . . lost their monopoly of history" in Central Europe, and hence control over the recording of that history (77). At the same time, there emerged almost a civic liability on the part of the writer/intellectual to reexamine the past, to recover his or her own history. Encapsulating this idea, Scammell quotes Michalski quoting the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka, who said that "history is, among other things, a responsibility" (77).

The implied shared intellectual heritage certainly *was* one of the original tenets of the reinvention of Central Europe in the 1980s. The arguments made by Kundera, Miłosz, Škvorecký, Konrád, and Kiš that the individual nations and potential nations of Central Europe share a common culture is based on meta-historical grounds: the countries share a history as subjects of larger empires, even if the specificities of which empire and when vary. There were other components of the cultural argument for Central Europe, but this is the one that was highlighted in Lisbon thanks to Scammell's introduction, and perhaps due to geopolitical shifts underway at the time. It is important to register here that this conference took place far into the trajectory of the 1980s movement to reinvent Central Europe. Many of the original proponents of the myth of a unified region were at that point ready to move beyond it, having sensed the limitations of the role of adjudicating historian, the default politician. The result of this process was a more nuanced view, which reflected the burden of living in the midst of so much history—in the midst of so much defeat, following Zagajewski—and the need to retreat from the responsibility of recording it. At this point, most of these Central European writers had worked through the concept of Central Europe as a unifying identity and emerged again as individual authors, eager to turn inward to their respective work.

On Sunday, May 8, after Anninsky, Dovlatov, Kim, and Tolstaya presented their papers on the state of Russian literature, the effects of perestroika and glasnost, and the meaning of "world literature," Scammell

asked Zinik to play the provocateur, to lead Tolstaya and the panel back to the subject of Central Europe. Scammell also referred to conversations that had taken place since the previous day's session: "I think there is a cultural problem here about the way that Russians perceive public dialogue as opposed to private conversation. And as Zinik has suggested, some of the private conversations here have been fascinating, intense, passionate, about the kind of things you would like to hear in this hall. We're faced with the problem of how to translate this discourse into that particular model" (106). The tenor of the debate changed, as it became even more explicit that there was a need for acts of translation and mediation beyond the purely linguistic. At this point, Brodsky stepped in as moderator, as someone who was not just able to translate linguistically but also culturally, and as a sort of intermediary figure, a peripheral but essential member of both the Central European circle and the panel of Russian writers. Making direct reference to private conversations with both parties, Brodsky turned to Konrád to fulfill Tolstaya's request that somebody explain concretely what the concept of Central Europe is supposed to "stand for" before she would agree to explain her own take on the concept.

Instead, Konrád issued an ultimatum to the members of the roundtable on what he understood to be the Russian point of view, that their tanks were more than "climactic disturbances." What Konrád stipulated here is the Russian writers' task as unofficial historians at a moment when the historical record was open for reinterpretation. It is a direct attack on the ethics of being a writer from a not-so-small country: "The question is whether our Russian colleagues will have enough moral stance and civility to confront the role of their country in the world and start to review Russian imperial politics" (107). While Scammell tried to return the discussion to the "cultural dimension," more and more comments from the other writers present directed the Russian writers towards a performative recognition of Central Europe. Their identities as individual authors were eclipsed by their perceived hegemonic power, a fact interpreted by Anninsky as a demand to adopt a political position.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Anninsky: "We are told to speak for ourselves, as individuals, and, yet when you see writers from the Soviet Union, you ask them questions as if they were representatives of their state! We do not represent anything here" (111).

In Lisbon, however, a superimposed narrative of official representation and détente simply contributed to the Russian roundtable participants' inability to understand what was being so bluntly demanded of them. As writers from other regions added their voices to the claims of the audience—Tolstaya did after all appeal to “former subjects of the British Empire” to make their views known—the conversation evolved once more, this time into a debate on the responsibility of the writer from an *imperial* country towards the history of its empire. In their efforts to convince Tolstaya, Anninsky, and even Brodsky of their point, the Central European writers came to some of the clearest formulations of their original idea, always stressing its anti-imperial, anti-Soviet, and even anti-Russian dimensions.

A postcolonial intervention

Once the topic of imperialism had been raised, four writers from outside the region spoke up on behalf of the Central European point of view: Roberto Calasso, Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie, and Susan Sontag. Calasso called for “some sort of psychological explanation of the Russian attitude towards these countries” (110). Walcott unleashed a wide-ranging critique of the scope of the conversation, objecting to the very terms of the debate and agreeing with Kiš that the Russian voice at this conference—along with the uninterrogated European voice—is taking certain words, such as “history” and “civilization,” for granted. Like Walcott, Rushdie focused on the tone of the discussion, but drew a more unambiguous parallel with the postcolonial dilemma vis-à-vis colonial hegemony.

György Konrád's question was: Will Russian intellectuals confront the role of the USSR in the world? That doesn't mean: Should they solve the problems? It means: Would they confront the role? It is very interesting that the answer seems, to me, to be: Not really. . . . Much of what was being said sounded very colonialist . . . : one of the great powers of colonialism is to describe the colonized. Now, the Russians have said over and over again, “We don't believe in the existence of Central Europe.”

The point is, if the Central Europeans believe in the existence of Central Europe, simply saying that, because you don't believe in it, you don't need to talk about it, is exactly a colonial act. (118)

By simply pointing out the parallel between the discussion at hand and how a colonial frame applies to Central Europe, Rushdie himself performs the central question of Central Europe's existence. In Rushdie's formulation, in turn elaborated by Sontag, the very claim to self-determination in the shadow of an imperial power demands an answer, regardless of one's relationship to that empire: the refusal to recognize is in itself significant. The following exchange between Brodsky, Sontag, and Miłosz moves the discussion from antagonism back to where it began, with an awareness of Brodsky's double consciousness and his unique position among all of the conference participants, and with the tension between speaking *as* a poet and intellectual and speaking *through* poetry.

BRODSKY. Of course, it's not an imperial position. Well, it is simply the only realistic attitude that we Russians can adopt towards the problem. And to call it "imperialistic," to charge us with a sort of colonialist attitude—colonialist disregard of the cultural and political realities . . . Well, I think it's terribly myopic. . . . A Russian writer is not a representative of the Soviet state. I beg you to distinguish between those things. That is, if you ask any one of us, "Would you like to have that tank removed from Eastern Europe?"—I take the liberty to speak for all of us—we would say yes, immediately. We feel terribly ashamed. . . .

SONTAG. But now you are talking power. I'm not asking you to liberate these countries. I'm asking you to speak in the name of literature. No one will think . . .

BRODSKY. In the name of literature, there is no such a thing as a "Central Europe," either. Well, we've been over this ground. There is Polish literature, Czech literature, Slovak literature, Serbo-Croatian literature, Hungarian, and so forth. Well, it's impossible to speak about this concept even in the name of literature. It's an oxymoron, if you will. . . .

MIŁOSZ. The concept of Central Europe is not an invention of Kundera. You have an obsession that it is an invention of Kundera. Not at all. Central Europe, as Susan Sontag said, is an anti-Soviet concept provoked by the occupation of those countries. . . . And I am afraid that there is a

certain taboo in Russian literature and this taboo is empire. . . . I would like to add that my friend, Joseph Brodsky, was one of the first, if not the first, to introduce the term “empire” in his poetry.

BRODSKY. Yeah, I know that. (120–21)

How might we relate this conversation, between people long familiar with each other and with each other's work, to the incendiary points brought up by Tolstaya the day before, as she confronted the idea of Central Europe for the very first time? Like Tolstaya, Brodsky wanted to separate his politicized position (his projection as a Soviet citizen) from his identity as a Russian writer.⁵¹ Sontag would not allow for this distinction, as she wanted him to “speak in the name of literature.” Like Tolstaya, Brodsky sees the literatures of Central European nations as separate and individual without a common point across linguistic lines; therefore, there is no need for translation. There *is*, however, a shift in the exchange between Miłosz and Brodsky, as Miłosz recites the history of the region, insisting on the significance of the words “occupation” and “empire,” moving between Soviet writers, Soviet occupiers, and finally the Russian Empire. Yet Miłosz also recognizes that the ethical demands on a writer are more complex than those on a politician, and acknowledges that Brodsky has already played the role of “taking back history,” first in his own journey into exile, and subsequently as a poet/intellectual writing in the West. His focus on Brodsky's prescient use of the word “empire” in his poetry turns the word into something larger than either writer, into a historical force too large to ignore.⁵² There is a crucial difference between Brodsky

⁵¹ It is worth noting that Brodsky tried to do the same thing in his debate with Kundera over Dostoyevsky: “[The marketplace] can also make the seasoned author view the stopping of his car by a soldier of the occupying army as a personal brush with history—such it would seem, was Mr. Kundera's feeling in Czechoslovakia in 1968. We may feel for him, but only until he starts to generalize about that soldier and the culture the soldier represents. Fear and disgust are understandable, but soldiers never represent culture, let alone a literature—they carry guns, not books” (1986, 478).

⁵² This is not the first time that Miłosz has commented on Brodsky's use of the word: in his 1980 essay “A Struggle against Suffocation,” Miłosz claims that “[e]mpire” is one of Brodsky's prankish words. . . . That their country is also an empire may, for the Russians, be a source of pride, and for Americans, with their strange habit of breast-beating, a source of shame, but the reality is inescapable. For Brodsky, ‘empire’ also

speaking through his poetry, and Brodsky speaking as a public intellectual. Miłosz, who has often felt confined as a poet by his earlier choices to speak out as a public intellectual, intuitively feels the difference.

The meeting in Lisbon displays a rhetorical struggle which eclipses historical arguments even as it is based on them. There is a clear connection to the rhetoric of postcolonial theory, though not to a desire to take the debate into the realm of political science or economy. In 1988, when figures like Rushdie, Walcott, and even Sontag were fully engaged in the postcolonial argument, it is understandable that words such as Tolstaya's and Brodsky's would be understood as imperialist and colonialist.⁵³ The proximity of Central European writers and intellectuals circulating in the West in the 1980s to postcolonial theorists created a metonymic relationship, especially in the universities and think tanks where many were installed. Their shared friendships, collaborations, and presence at conferences made the postcolonial language a shared one. Alluding to a postcolonial rhetoric does not mean that Miłosz's statement aspires to ascribe a postcolonial status to Central Europe.

Miłosz's claim that the word "empire" was writing itself from within Brodsky's poetry *is* the political action at the 1988 Lisbon Conference. As Rushdie pointed out, the polemic is not about tanks but about the act of acknowledgement. After the Russian intellectuals were introduced to the debates that had been raging within Western academic and cultural marketplaces, asking them to acknowledge the role of empire in Russian culture at the moment they were personally liberating themselves from the same empire was of key importance.

Another critical issue present, but never foregrounded at the Lisbon Conference is the separate political and cultural course taken by Yugoslavia. Parallel to the discussion between Konrad, Miłosz, Kiš, Michalski, Zagajewski, Škvorecký, Błoński, and Esterházy were presentations by Ismael Kadare and Ivan Lalić, who took their allotted time to present short

means the very dimensions of a continent, the monumentality itself, of which he is fond" (Miłosz 1980, 23–24).

⁵³ It would only be natural to note the hegemonic force of the postcolonial argument as well, when understood as a part of the cultural burden necessary to rejoining the West, and in particular the Anglo-American and Francophone world.

literary histories of Albania and Yugoslavia, respectively. Veno Taufer objected that all of Lalić's examples are Serbian, proving that Yugoslavia is an artificial political construct rather than a deep-rooted cultural entity. Taufer based his argument on the words of Ivan Cankar, a Slovenian author writing in 1913, who in fact favored the founding of Yugoslavia: "He said that our southern brothers are brothers in politics but, as far as culture is concerned, Slovenians are much closer to Italians and Austrians than to Serbs, for example. What he stressed is very important because it tells us something about our so-called Central European identity" (91). The exchange between Lalić and Taufer, which demonstrates a marked fault line between Serb and Slovene cultural identities, seemed to take place in isolation from the rest of the conference. Kadare's intervention seemed even more of an outlier: his ten-minute speech describing Albania as a small nation par excellence bears all the characteristics of the Central European cultural legacy described by Miłosz, yet these traits were presented only as proof of Albania's uniqueness. While other participants of the Central European roundtable celebrated diversity as a fundamental ideal of this region, Taufer pointed to one historic limit of this inclusion and tolerance. Taufer and Lalić are by no means mutually antagonistic; all three authors from Southeastern Europe, however, focused on the logic of ethnic particularity and not on regional unity.

Does this imply that to not believe in the existence of Yugoslavia is to not believe in Central Europe? In what follows, I explore the dissolution of both entities and the relationships in their parallel histories. I also return in Chapter Four to some of the lessons of the 1988 Lisbon Conference regarding the role that the international community ascribes to writers deemed "dissidents" during this process. By the mid-1990s, a clear line of questioning emerges pointing to the exclusivity of the Central European circle, and its blindness to the very real ethnic tensions on the underside of the multicultural utopia. One way of understanding this new challenge is as a hegemonic shift from the need to distinguish Central European identity from the homogeneous Soviet Union to the need to speak on behalf of a Balkan alterity in the face of a mythic Central European ideal.

The North–South Axis Returns: Central and Southeastern Europe

Maria Todorova: Imagining the Balkans

In her chapter on Central Europe from *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), Maria Todorova provides an insightful summary of the publications and debates that contributed to the reemergence of “Central Europe” in the 1980s. From the initial theory of the Hungarian historian Jenő Szűcs, according to which Eastern Europe must be divided into “East-Central” and “Southeastern,” to the political wrangling in the early 1990s over which countries to include in the newly expanding NATO, Todorova follows a trajectory of intellectual thought through the thorny issues of cultural imperialism, identity politics, economic makeovers, and the general chaos of transition. In other words, she addresses the mythology around Central Europe and analyzes the myth’s effects without attempting to answer Timothy Garton Ash’s haunting question: “Does Central Europe Exist?” (1986).

In Todorova’s narrative, in the early 1980s there were three versions of the Central European myth: the partitioning that Szűcs outlines; an “attitude” described by Miłosz; and the “tragedy” dramatized by Kundera. She isolates characteristics of each, and suggests that while Szűcs dismisses Southeastern Europe from his image of the region, Miłosz characterizes the area as non-Russian “without mentioning the Balkans separately” (145). With Kundera’s essay, and then in broader strokes in the ensuing polemic a decade later between Havel and Brodsky, Todorova focuses the issue of Central Europe around the demonization of Russia and Russian culture. Where Todorova sees Miłosz as “ambiguous” towards Russia, she asserts that Kundera and Havel use Russia as an “essentialized alien,” a distinct culture more foreign to the West than a Czech, Polish, or Hungarian middle ground. In this view, fed by incidents such as the debate at the Lisbon Conference, resisting the essentialized Russian East is what gives Central Europe its “centralness” (146–47).

Here Todorova introduces a second round in the debate about Central Europe, as articulated in various publications of the late 1980s, including

Cross Currents. Todorova uses George Schöpflin and Nancy Wood's book *In Search of Central Europe* as a "representative sample" of scholarship on the region and classifies the essays it includes into the three master narratives of Szűcs, Miłosz, and Kundera. References to Southeastern Europe are few and far between. One notable exception Todorova makes is Predrag Matvejević's article "Central Europe Seen from the East of Europe," which includes Balkan cities like Belgrade and Bucharest, and distinct parts of Yugoslavia. Todorova draws attention to Matvejević's fluid view of Yugoslav identity, which is not subject to the "nesting orientalisms" discussed in other chapters of her book, in which Slovenia and Croatia especially are portrayed as "more Western," and regions to the South and East of Yugoslavia are exoticized as "more Eastern" (58). Matvejević is also a key figure in representing Yugoslav culture in *Cross Currents*.

Todorova then outlines some of the major historical attempts discussed earlier in this chapter to theorize the center of Europe into existence: Naumann's pan-Germanic "Mitteleuropa"; Masaryk's interwar dream of a politically united Central Europe; and finally the historian Halecki's definition of the Visegrád region as always already Western (150–52). The contrast between Halecki's view of Southeastern Europe and that of the intellectuals of the 1980s forms the core of Todorova's critique of the Central European movement; I will return to this particular comparison in my reevaluation of the region along its North–South axis. For the moment, I agree with Todorova's most fundamental point—that ideas of Central Europe in the 1980s owed as much to what they excluded as to what they included.

Central and Southeastern Europe

After the three Wheatland Conferences that gathered the writers and essayists most likely to contribute to the journal, and a few scattered congresses in the late 1980s and early 1990s, other concerns took precedence over the cultural union initially proposed by these exiled dissidents. The outbreak of war in Bosnia and the invitation of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary into NATO split the region into a "successful"

and “progressive” North vs. a “barbaric” and “regressive” South. In late November 1999, a review of Timothy Garton Ash’s *History of the Present* by Perry Anderson appeared in the *London Review of Books*. The subsequent exchange of letters about the piece ran through the following February.⁵⁴ At the start of the polemic, Anderson places Garton Ash in the context of travel writing, especially as it was done within the tradition of English imperial history. Drawing on figures like Lord Byron, Evelyn Waugh, T. E. Lawrence, R. W. Seton-Watson, and Rebecca West, he points to a thin line between description, admiration, and advocacy of a region, and the responsibility that this entails. Garton Ash is painted as an adventurer, free to engage in the political struggles of the Cold War because of his secure identity as a British subject: “When he set out in 1978 for Berlin in his blue Alfa Romeo, Britain was not in question” (Anderson 1999, 5). Garton Ash’s eventual position of influence as an informal advisor to Thatcher’s government is proof to Anderson that in the 1980s Garton Ash was transformed from an adventurer/journalist into an advocate for Central Europe. On the Central European movement as defined by Kundera or Miłosz, Anderson writes: “Its function was, on the one side, to draw a cultural line demarcating this zone from such truly East European (viz. backward) countries as Romania or Yugoslavia—and even more from perpetually barbarian, totalitarian Russia; on the other, to link it, as a cradle of political tolerance and high culture, to the homelands of liberty and prosperity in Western Europe, from which, on Kundera’s showing, only malign fate had wrenched it away” (6). Anderson identifies Garton Ash’s self-conscious use of the Central European myth as a pragmatic, political one, as the frontline against communism, “the Achilles heel of the Soviet Empire.” In fact, in *History of the Present* Garton Ash laments the misuse of this idea in “a politics of relativism and exclusion” and condemns the disparity in the European Union’s treatment of the North (Poland–Czech Republic–Hungary) and South (the rest of the region) (Garton Ash 1999, 349). The book, after

⁵⁴ The argument in question was in fact a sequel to a 1996 debate on a similar subject in the same forum.

all, is primarily about the former Yugoslavia, and Garton Ash's interpretation of its last decade.

Anderson's broadside attack aims squarely at this juncture. He calls Garton Ash's condemnation hypocritical and claims that Garton Ash spent 1987 to 1993 advocating for Central Europe's inclusion in NATO, rather than heralding the dangers of nationalism in Yugoslavia. Garton Ash's insistence that a mythic, peaceful coexistence was possible despite ethnic and religious differences in the region made him "oblivious to the Balkan crisis" during this period. Anderson turns Garton Ash's analyses of Western Europe's failings against him, *ad hominem*: "If the voice of any individual in the public realm bears a measure of responsibility for the tragic inversion of priorities as Yugoslavia slid towards the abyss, it would be his. Of course, he was not just on his own. From the 1980s onward, well before it was marketed as such, 'Central Europe' was a magnet for good reporters and enquiring intellectuals" (Anderson 1999, 7). From this point forward, Anderson's polemic broadens from a personal one against Garton Ash to a more general overview of the Central European movement and the effects of actions taken by Western governments, using Susan Woodward's *Balkan Tragedy* for support. The article elaborates several different and interesting threads: Garton Ash's distinction between intellectuals and politicians, his close relationship with Eastern and Western heads of state, the subliminal primacy of Poland in his discussion of Central European strategy, and the absence of Russia from this geopolitical picture. In a response which ran in the January 6 issue of the *London Review of Books*, Garton Ash responds to all these accusations, but focuses primarily on the notion of his individual culpability as "a grave and extraordinary charge" (2000, 4). He adds that the Visegrád countries did not receive as much funding as it might appear, and that the success of their transition to democracy and inclusion in the "new Europe" was not a foregone conclusion. Garton Ash disparages that assumption as "precisely the kind of mythopoeic idealizing of 'Central Europe' that Anderson wrongly ascribes to me" (5). Yet it is precisely that mythopoetic idealizing of Central Europe that is at the center of his book, even in the face of the post-1989 failures of the practical application of the idea. If Garton Ash's claim about Anderson is correct, we must consider two of the ideas that

Anderson is proposing. The first is the belief that the political *use* of the idea of Central Europe forced the exclusion of Southeastern Europe. The second is that Central European claims to being always already Western were not just patently anti-Eastern, but also inherently anti-Southeastern, or anti-Ottoman.

The Garton Ash–Anderson debate leads us back to the challenge Todorova presents in *Imagining the Balkans* to address the relationship between the Balkans and the mythical project of Central Europe. One might evaluate the relationship in a more empirical way through the economic policies of Central European countries towards their neighbors below the Danube, or using a straightforward discourse analysis of the term “Balkan” in Central European media. In the context of Transatlantic Central Europe, however, I am primarily interested in the way an omnibus vision like *Cross Currents* refracts Yugoslavia through the lens of its longer-term project. Following Todorova, finding a place for Southeastern Europe in the imaginary cultural geography of Central Europe has more to do with how useful, relevant, and/or difficult it is to assimilate various aspects of Balkan culture into a larger regional identity. Fault lines between the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, for example, reemerge because of the importance of the Habsburg era to the concept of Central Europe, and the exoticized nature of Ottoman rule as seen through the same lens. Returning to the twelve volumes of *Cross Currents* to evaluate the selection, placement, and ratio of articles relating to Southeastern Europe, and reading two key essays representing this region, I will delineate which Balkan identities were interpolated by the Central European movement, which were not, and why.

It is important to reiterate here that many articles in *Cross Currents* claim that their primary purpose is to introduce authors and artists from Central Europe to a Western audience. Beyond defining fundamental questions for Central Europe such as its geographic boundaries, I see this journal as an experiment in defining a regional culture. What elements must be included to persuade both a Western audience and scattered groups of émigrés that Central Europe is a culture in and of itself, a coherent whole separate from Russian, German, and Turkish spheres that have occupied the same physical space? After 1989, when the region was un-

moored from its Soviet allegiance, a striking North–South divide emerged. In the initial volumes of *Cross Currents*, writing about cultural figures from both Romania and Yugoslavia appears to symbolize the journal’s goal of diversity or heterogeneity, while still achieving an integrated reality. (In the case of Romania, the Kingdom’s tolerance of exiles and refugees from other parts of Europe hovers in the background.) Over the course of the journal’s publication, the Yugoslav entries begin to foreground a crisis in the belief in diversity. What happened? The concept of Yugoslavia itself, on the one hand utopic, on the other hand held together by external political forces, begins to dissolve. In issue twelve, the journal’s last, there is a photo essay by Damir Kalogjera showing the ruins of Dubrovnik after Serb bombing in 1991 (see Figs. 8, 9, and 10).

Essentially, by this point in the run of *Cross Currents*, Yugoslav identity has shifted into the haunted space that Jewish identity initially occupied. But this symbol could not be held at a safe, nostalgic distance. These ruins were fresh, not separated from the present by a historic chasm and archaeology. The supposed peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, at least until 1990, served as a prototype for the multicultural utopia that the myth of Central Europe presented to its potential residents. According to the intellectual history generated by *Cross Currents*, the failure of that vision of coexistence led to a real disillusionment for Central European intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic; the resulting disenchantment played at least as vital a part in the collapse of the idea of Central Europe as the military and economic temptations of Western Europe in the early 1990s. The role that cultural gatekeepers such as Karadžić and Mladić played in inciting violence in Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia, constituted a further “betrayal of the intellectuals,” perhaps undermining the very role that Miłosz and Kundera had once felt compelled to play.

Despite foundational essays like Kundera’s and Miłosz’s that claim that the boundaries of Central Europe are not distinct, the editors of *Cross Currents* had a definite geographic definition in mind, and added a statement at the end of volume six that placed the southern border of Central Europe at a religious demarcation point—following Miłosz—between

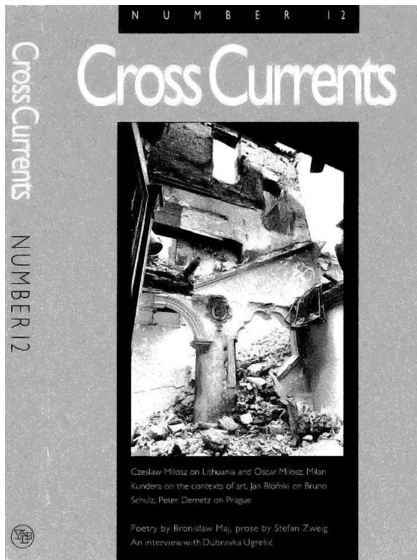


Figure 8. Front cover of *Cross Currents* 12 (1993), “The remains of the sixteenth-century Martinušić Palace.” (Courtesy of Michigan Slavic Publications.)

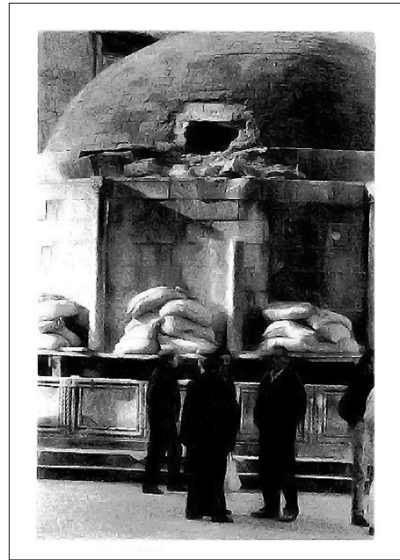


Figure 9. Illustration in *Cross Currents* 12 (1993), “A direct hit on a fountain built by Onofrio della Cava in the fifteenth century.” (Courtesy of Michigan Slavic Publications.)



Figure 10. Illustration in *Cross Currents* 12 (1993), “The entrance to an incinerated house.” (Courtesy of Michigan Slavic Publications.)

Yugoslavia/Romania and Albania/Bulgaria/Greece.⁵⁵ The nations and nationalities included are listed alphabetically, alongside lists of disciplines (“literature, culture, and history”), literary genres (“poetry, prose, interviews, and essays”), and visual media (“illustrations, photographs, and artwork”). The editors claim that the object of study is a “cultural unit” which has been determined by certain historical events and their impressions on Central Europeans. Because the journal is composed of those impressions, each issue cumulatively creates that reality. In other words, *Cross Currents* marks the beginning of a chain of consensus that brings the diverse elements of nations, genres, and media together into one unit. If that consensus is threatened, or if the “awareness of commonality” subsides, then the nucleus of the journal cannot hold. The editors and contributors of *Cross Currents* must believe, like the Encyclopedists did, that they are simply asserting their authority to record and comment on an objective reality. Over the course of the journal’s publication, the Yugoslav entries begin to foreground the possibility of division and the search for a new intellectual cement, especially after 1989.

Two Yugoslav entries: Vladimir Dedijer

Two intellectuals—Vladimir Dedijer and Kiš—represented Southeastern Europe in the larger diasporic community of Central Europe, and their subject positions diverge along the same lines as Kiš and Kundera. Dedijer is probably best known as an early historian of Communist Yugoslavia. He wrote an authorized biography of President Josip Broz Tito (1953), an official history of the country (1972), and other books chronicling the long twentieth century in Yugoslavia. He was one of the original true believers in the new faith, who went to Spain and worked on political newspapers in the 1930s, fought with Tito as a partisan during the war, and was appointed to a high position in the new government after the war. This part of his biography appears in *Cross Currents* 4 (1985), in an autobiographical

⁵⁵ That is, according to national boundaries as they were drawn before 1989. If we were to consider present-day boundaries, Macedonia would be south of the border as well.

piece, “My Two Comrades.” An editorial note introduces the piece: “Written in 1957, this manuscript was given to Eleanor Roosevelt for safekeeping and is published here for the first time. We have appended to the text some unpublished correspondence between Djilas and Dedijer” (387). The piece that follows is Dedijer’s *Captive Mind*, a section of his memoirs in which he draws a self-portrait similar to those in Miłosz’s 1953 study of the intellectual’s enchantment with communism during the interwar period, and subsequent arrival at an empty faith. The inclusion of this piece in *Cross Currents* is unusual, because most of the postwar entries either describe the culture of dissent, or concern artists and writers who have kept a good distance from politics. Over half of the articles were written by those already living in the West in the 1980s, and others, like the essay about Ivšić, attempt to reintegrate the work of those living in exile into the Central European canon. In this case, Dedijer presents the reader with a view from the inside, in the literary genre of “memoir.”

Another set of published memoirs, the diaries Dedijer kept during the war, launched his career in postwar Yugoslavia (1951). The newly published memoirs and letters in *Cross Currents* mirror the first set of diaries, but add private elements of disillusionment and personal tragedy. They can be seen as an illustration of the individual dimension of the intellectual that Said feels is missing in Gramsci: “There is no such thing as a private intellectual. . . . Nor is there *only* a public intellectual, someone who exists just as a figurehead or spokesperson or symbol of a cause, movement, or position. There is always the personal inflection and the private sensibility. . . . Least of all should an intellectual be there to make his/her audiences feel good: the whole point is to be embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant” (Said 1996, 12; emphasis in the original). The climax of Dedijer’s memoirs involves such a moment, when he speaks out against Tito’s ouster of Milovan Djilas from the party, ending his active political career. Dedijer’s entry in the encyclopedia of *Cross Currents* allows for the possibility that on an individual level, a person may take on the role of the intellectual, even if he is not a lifelong member of the opposition. It demonstrates as well a commitment on the part of the editors to examine the “embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant” histories of

Central Europe, and not just the nostalgic, Austro-Hungarian histories, or the heroic stories of the Solidarity struggle.

An even closer parallel to Miłosz, however, is contained in Dedijer's 1983 essay on Ivo Andrić, titled "Literature and History in the Totality of the Historical Process."⁵⁶ What is most intriguing about this article is its method: Dedijer the historian analyzes Andrić's qualities as a literary "historian" (as opposed to a historian of literature). The essay is not about literature at all, but about the possibility of reading history through literature. There are echoes of this idea in every entry of *Cross Currents*, from Miłosz's article to the last, poetic descriptions of Sarajevo under siege. It is the journal's analogue to the role of historian played by the public intellectuals at the Lisbon Conference, and a fundamental element of how Transatlantic Central Europe came to be. As the nations in question have products of their culture as their only historical record, *Cross Currents* aims to reconstruct the history of the region based on its novels, plays, films, paintings, operas, and other cultural products. Essays on art end up being what stitches this cultural fabric together. As an accredited historian, Dedijer is a believable authority for this interdisciplinary project, a voice of reason: "Why is it that writers like Dobrica Ćosić, Antonije Isaković, Branko Ćopić, Mihailo Lalić, Meša Selimović, Erih Koš, Miodrag Bulatović, Matej Bor, Matija Bećković, and others have entered more fully into the total historical process of the revolution of 1941–1945 than have many historians, sociologists, and political scientists?" (243). It is not immediately apparent how Dedijer intends to answer this question. Is he calling for a revision in historiography, to an approach more like what we now call "social history"? Or is he alluding to the decidedly unorthodox view that a novelist, even one adhering to socialist realist principles, can portray more of life's contradictions and shades of grey than can a socialist historian?

There is one other major element circulating in Dedijer's article, the question of "cultural genocide." Here his international persona as United

⁵⁶ Whether this would qualify as an encyclopedic entry under "Dedijer" or "Andrić" is up for debate; we gain almost too much information about both figures to reconcile them with other entries under their name, which anticipates Kiš's final judgment about the encyclopedia project.

Nations delegate and chairman of the Russell War Crimes Tribunal comes to the fore. After early sections in the essay examining Andrić's concept of space and time, Dedijer uses the novelist to make a case that the current definition of genocide should be expanded to account for cultural genocide. In the findings of the second Russell Tribunal, "the first act of cultural genocide in Latin America took place during the Spanish colonization. This was the so-called 'Christianization' or destruction of the cultural identity of the Indian people, carried out by the Franciscans and other Catholic orders" (244).⁵⁷ Dedijer continues to apply the principle of cultural genocide under colonialism and/or imperialism via Andrić to the Ottoman and Austrian Empires, and implicitly, to the Soviet Union as well. Dedijer uses the two definitions of genocide to structure his discussion of Andrić. He lists the five criteria that the United Nations uses to define physical genocide,⁵⁸ four additional criteria that constitute cultural genocide,⁵⁹ and then finds examples of each throughout Andrić's work, even citing Andrić's dissertation on the Turkish Empire. "In presenting the systemization of genocidal acts in the works of Ivo Andrić, I am following the United Nations Convention of 1948, so that I might show more vividly to what extent Andrić, by going into all the nuances of cruelty and pain involved in the phenomenon of genocide, went further than other writers, and surpassed the dry wording of legal conventions" (266). After twelve pages of examples, Dedijer has only reached the third category to define genocidal activity, and stops his catalog there, citing lack of space. The next section, "Martyrdom and Heroism according to Andrić," begins: "Sometimes Andrić's literary

⁵⁷ There were, in fact, two sessions of the International Russell Tribunal, founded by Bertrand Russell. Dedijer participated in both of them. The first Russell Tribunal met in 1967 to discuss accusations of war crimes and genocide in Vietnam; the second met in 1976 to discuss possible genocides in Latin America.

⁵⁸ "a) murder of the members of a group; b) severe injury to the physical or mental integrity of the members of a group; c) intentional subjugation of a group to living conditions calculated to bring about its complete or partial physical annihilation; d) measures having the objective of preventing births within the group; e) forced transfer of children of the target group to another group" (quoted in Dedijer 1983, 253).

⁵⁹ "a) prohibition of the use of a national language; b) prevention of schooling; c) destruction of books; d) destruction of cultural buildings and monuments" (quoted in Dedijer 1983, 253).

works remind one of a great arsenal, from which every critic may select the weapons he needs at any given moment” (266). By this point, the parallel between Dedijer and Miłosz has ended.

Part of the difficulty in imagining a geopolitical space for the concept of Central Europe is navigating between imperialism and nationalism. Resistance to imperialism comes naturally enough to those living in and writing about the satellite countries of the Soviet Union. They often refer to it indirectly, as Dedijer does, sometimes to avoid censorship, sometimes just for the sake of subtlety. Miłosz’s dire warnings about nationalism, on the other hand, are not subtle, and neither is his solution to work towards “a clear understanding of the past,” to get to a shared regional identity. Dedijer’s treatment of Andrić as a historian of genocide reveals a potential problem with turning to history to define a regional identity, for Dedijer’s history only identifies with one ethnic identity—Serbian—and details the different crimes perpetrated against that group. He follows the program of *Cross Currents*, but with a different ideological agenda, and produces a different result.

Both Dedijer’s memoirs and his essay on Andrić prove the difficulty of incorporating him into the Central European canon, despite the fact that he satisfies the basic definitions set forth in the mission statements of *Cross Currents* and in the genealogy of the intellectual and the encyclopedia. His work embraces the methodology suggested by Miłosz and other founding members of the Transatlantic Central European project, the reinterpretation of history through literature. The problem is not with Dedijer or with the identity labeled “Balkan,” but with Miłosz’s concept of “history as a panacea.” The paradox I find in this foundational idea is the contradiction between having histories of the diverse and multicultural literatures of Central Europe reflect comparable structures of identity. The failure of the Yugoslav example to produce a “shared regional identity” only illustrates more clearly a fault line that is *part* of the Central European project. In generating a novel based on lived experience, authors extract a specific, personal dimension from the experience. In parsing the novel in order to *write a history*, the essayist/historian extracts only a few more, equally personal dimensions of the experience of reading the novel. The results of such idiosyncratic acts undoubtedly

contain new, autonomous histories to counter an imposed, state-sponsored history, but it is questionable that these histories are common to a larger cultural identity.

Two Yugoslav entries: Danilo Kiš

Kiš is writing one gigantic story of himself, his family, his century, his world: a catalogue of life-size in which experiences talk to each other across the volumes as books talk to one another in Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa*.

—Marianna Birnbaum, "History and Human Relationships in the Fiction of Danilo Kiš" (1989)

The intellectual cement required by the Central European project was in theory best contained in the person and work of Kiš. His presence in *Cross Currents* served to suture multiple identities: he considered himself Central European, Balkan, and "Hungario-Yugoslav" (in Kundera's words), of Jewish origin, Western, Eastern, a novelist, an essayist, an intellectual, an encyclopedist, and, in his own way, also a historian. He even provided us with his own biographical/necrological entry in the encyclopedia, titled "Birth Certificate." It is cited in Predrag Matvejević's article "Danilo Kiš: *Encyclopedia of the Dead*," in *Cross Currents* 7 (1988), and was originally published as an addendum to his 1983 *Works*. He fills it with literary interpretations of his own history, which at times border on absurdity, such as here:

From my mother I inherited a predilection towards the narrative mixing of fact and legend, and from my father my pathos and irony. It is not without significance for my relationship to literature that my father was the author of the international timetable: hence this constitutes my entire cosmopolitan and literary inheritance.

My mother read novels until her twentieth year, when she realized not without regret that novels are an “invention” and rejected them once and for all. This aversion of hers towards “empty invention” is also latently present in me. (Kiš in Matvejević, 347)

There are more entries on Danilo Kiš in *Cross Currents* than on any other figure from Southeastern Europe. Apart from Matvejević’s article, three other essays treat Kiš’s work. His short story “Simon Magus” appears in the 1989 issue. And his response essay to the manifestos by Kundera and others, “Variations on a Theme of Central Europe,” ran in 1987. This last piece is the only one that appears in the first section of the journal, usually reserved for theoretical and mission statements. This is significant, because it stakes a claim for Kiš’s membership in the Central European circle.

Of the four essays on Kiš, the one that gives the most extraliterary information is Serge Shishkoff’s “Košava in a Coffee Pot: Or a Dissection of a Literary Cause Célèbre” (1987). It is a lengthy and detailed account of the polemics generated by the publication of Kiš’s *Grobnica za Borisa Davidoviča* (A Tomb for Boris Davidovič) in 1976. Kiš’s problems began with one literary critic insinuating, likely for political reasons, that the book was plagiarized from foreign sources. *Tomb*, like much of Kiš’s other work, is transparent about its sources, even footnoting them. For Kiš it is part of his experimentation with “the narrative mixing of fact and legend.” Shishkoff follows the story through six years of accusations and lawsuits. Kiš himself managed to avoid the eye of the storm, using the time instead to write *Čas anatomije* (The anatomy lesson, 1978), an extended essay on the controversy. The “literary history” Shishkoff describes is of a more traditional type—the facts behind the publication of a few of Kiš’s literary works—but the nature of Kiš’s work brings us back to the literary history explored by *Cross Currents*, and problematized by Dedijer. According to Norbert Czarny, Kiš’s mixture of fact and fiction, his insistence that “nothing is more fantastic than reality,” leads him down an encyclopedic path:⁶⁰

⁶⁰ This follows Dostoyevsky (Matvejević 1988, 340). *Tomb* is neither a novel, nor a collection of short stories, but a cycle of stories similar in form to Bruno Schulz’s work. Kiš will continue with this form in his next book, *Encyclopedia of the Dead*, the title of which is taken from one of the stories in the collection. As the title of the entire volume,

“Kiš links together the episodes [of *A Tomb for Boris Davidovič*], using cross-references or echoes. Those imaginary lives which have ‘only the misfortune to be real,’ could be recorded in some Encyclopedia Sovietica, if such a work decided to name and rehabilitate the millions of victims of the Purges. Nothing is more effective than [the] stylization of an encyclopedia to bring reality to light. The process of writing at the boundary of reality and imagination allows Kiš to reveal the basis of a still unknown ‘History’” (1984, 281). Even before *Tomb*, the obsessive cataloging of his father’s international timetable, alluded to ironically in “Birth Certificate” as the basis for his cosmopolitanism, is a recurring motif in Kiš. The various father figures in his work, Eduard Sam of Garden, Ashes, E. S. of Hourglass, and their demiurgic attempts to write larger and larger timetables, become a recurring motif in essays on Kiš as well. The attempts on the part of his interpreters to describe the elements that make up Kiš’s work are reminiscent of the interdisciplinary lists in the mission statements of *Cross Currents*, and the project that follows them: “His novels combine a classical narration, an essay, a biography, the summary of an interrogation; they play on different levels. . . . For him listing is as much a poetic exercise as a mnemonic process. It is a way of inscribing forever by accumulating names and things. It shows a will to define a whole, not letting anything escape” (Czarny 1984, 281). From these types of analogies, it might seem that Kiš is the prototype of the Central European intellectual, and a successful ambassador from his native realm of Southeastern Europe to the mythical Central Europe. Perhaps this was even true for a time. However, by the time “Variations on a Theme” and his next cycle of stories, *Enciklopedija mrtvih* (Encyclopedia of the Dead), are published, Kiš’s work carries a critique of the encyclopedic project articulated above.

In “Variations on a Theme of Central Europe” Kiš identifies various risks linked to speaking about Central Europe as a “homogeneous geopolitical and cultural phenomenon” (1987, 1). The fact that each of the thirty-eight paragraphs in the essay is preceded by a number prevents the reader from reading the piece as one logical argument. Instead, we have

“encyclopedia” takes back its generic meaning, and the stories become entries. Retroactively, this defines the form of *Tomb* as well.

thirty-eight points to consider, all related to a larger whole. The essay alternates between evaluating the more general claims of the Central European project: “5. Whether one favors a centripetal or centrifugal theory ...” (2); “29. Psychoanalysis, that typically Viennese product, is today ...” (11), and considering specific, biographical, even anecdotal examples: “10. We would need to determine whether Bartók obstinately used the expression ‘Eastern European’ ...” (4); “26. The wife of a Hungarian writer, a happy product of mixed blood, was asked by the widow of Kosztolányi ...” (10). Kiš occasionally quotes Kundera directly, and approvingly. For the most part, however, his paragraphs address Kundera’s claims, consider the possibilities, and subtly undermine previously stable positions in the myth of Central Europe. The best description of the resulting miasma is paragraph one: “With no precise borders, with no Center or rather with several centers, ‘Central Europe’ looks today more and more like the dragon of Alca in the second book of Anatole France’s *Penguin Island* to which the Symbolist movement was compared: no one who claimed to have seen it could say what it looked like” (1).

It appears that this lack of definition is truly damning. Can anything be recuperated from the lack of coherence between the different claims about Central Europe? Kiš does make a claim himself, in paragraph thirty-eight: “If I say that *the awareness of form* is a characteristic shared by all writers from Central Europe, form as desire to give meaning to life and to metaphysical ambiguity, form as *possibility of choice*, form that is an attempt to locate points of fulcrum like those of Archimedes in the chaos around us, form that is opposed to the disorders of barbarism and to the irrational arbitrariness of instincts, I am afraid I have only generalized my own intellectual and literary obsessions” (14; emphasis in the original). This claim, like the others, is laid out and then demonstrated to be the product of a personal obsession, which does not render it untrue, but rather subject to “the subversive influence of biography”⁶¹—as is every-

⁶¹ This phrase of Jean-Paul Sartre is another hidden link between Dedijer, Kiš, and Kundera. Dedijer uses the intellectual *par excellence* several times anecdotally in his essay on Andrić, to prove the universality of his claims and the legitimacy of his brand of Westernized Marxism (as well as his friendship with Sartre, with whom he cochaired the Russell Tribunal). Kiš is cited as being “fond of” Sartre’s phrase about “the

thing, encyclopedic or not. It is the gesture of a house painter who paints himself into a corner, but then exits through the window, where there was a ladder waiting all along.

The possibility of a book of fiction “cross-referencing” itself, as Czarny suggests about *Tomb* above, does not occur automatically; in a way it is a gesture left over from the sheer excess of historical details in two modernist novels that tried to catalog the human mind from almost opposite poles, Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Musil’s *The Man without Qualities*. At least these two earlier encounters between literature and the encyclopedia, if not dozens of others, haunt the work of Kiš with the question of whether this can even be done. Can rationalist means account for the totality of human experience? This is the premise behind the *Encyclopedia of the Dead*. It contains the minutest detail of every life that has ended. Kiš envisions Central Europe in a similar way: it is an imagined entity *within* a literary text, already a hybrid of reality and imagination—that is, the dragon of Alca.

With this view, Kiš departs from the rationalist project of the first Encyclopedists, and rewrites Miłosz’s and Kundera’s return to Enlightenment values as a phenomenon in literary history. Kiš even wrote this perspective into his “Birth Certificate,” when he describes his arrival in Yugoslavia at the age of twelve: “Immediately after my arrival [in Cetinje, in 1947] I took the examination for the art school. Petar Lumbarda and Milo Milunović were on the examination committee. The bust of Voltaire which we drew—a plaster of paris casting from Hudon’s portrait statue—reminded me of an old German whom I had known in Novi Sad; that is how I drew him. Still, I was accepted, probably on the basis of my other works” (Matvejević 1988, 347–48).

The subversive influence of Kiš’s own biography most certainly leads him to redraw Voltaire,⁶² an act akin to Dedijer’s historicism of Andrić.

subversive influence of biography” (Matvejević 1988, 338). In “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” in the absence of any great cultural figure, Kundera’s philosopher friend sends a letter to Sartre requesting intellectual support. Kundera proceeds to complain that Sartre is, in fact, the one responsible for the absence of great cultural figures, but then grudgingly admits that the default *philosophe* did get the job done.

⁶² Even in this description we are faced with an unknown, personal quantity. No matter what the level of historical detail, we cannot know who the “old German” of

Kiš challenges the possibility of creating a coherent history of Central Europe through literature because fact and fiction are inextricably joined. According to Kiš, Dedijer's analysis, no matter what his biography, is only going to create another fiction.

After 1990, Todorova claims, the Central European project developed from a purely theoretical concept to one that could be applied to a pragmatic, political sphere. In this instrumental mode, determining whether Southeastern Europe—which had previously hovered undefined between “East and West,” “Russia and Germany”—*belonged* in Central Europe became much more pressing. From a political-science point of view, the intellectual ideal of a unified Central Europe disintegrated at the juncture of whether various countries would be admitted into the NATO military alliance or into the European Union. Anderson's claim against Garton Ash also rests on this connection between the ideal and the real, with Garton Ash's defense being that he never wanted any part of the ideal.

Todorova's challenge is contained in the last paragraph of her chapter. “It is not enough to expose the Central European myth as insidious, or its attempt to contrast itself to the Balkans as invidious,” she writes, one must go further into the comparison of the two mythologies. “Juxtaposing the notion of Central Europe as an idea with its short-term cultural/political potential to the concept of the Balkans with its powerful historical and geographic basis, but with an equally limited although much longer historical span, one can argue that the two concepts are methodologically incomparable, and therefore incompatible constructs” (1997, 160).

There is no argument against the “powerful historical and geographic basis” of the concept of the Balkans as presented by Todorova. I would first agree that the concepts of Central Europe and of the Balkans are methodologically incomparable, but I would also argue that this does not necessarily mean that the “Central European intellectual” is writing *against* Balkan culture. Rather, in a context like that of *Cross Currents*, in which the very definition of a culture is being forged next to a specific re-

Novi Sad was, and therefore we cannot know whether Kiš is creating a memorial, comparing Voltaire, perhaps, to a German-Jewish victim of the Novi Sad massacre; demonizing Voltaire by painting him as a war criminal; or just remembering a face that would otherwise have been forgotten.

gional identity, the dilemma of how or when to include Southeastern Europe became essential to the project. The heterogeneity of Southeastern Europe has been often used to stand in for a lost heterogeneity in countries further north (like the idea of Judaism as an internalized other). At the same time, the “peaceful” coexistence of different ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, at least up until 1990, served as a prototype for the multicultural utopia that the myth of Central Europe presented to its potential residents. If we follow the intellectual history generated by *Cross Currents*, it is the failure of that vision of coexistence that led to disillusionment for the Central European intellectuals, and the loss of a common ideal played at least as vital a part in the collapse of Central Europe as the military and economic temptations of mainstream Europe in the early 1990s.

Kiš and Dedijer both anticipate Central Europe’s loss of currency in radically different ways. On the one hand, the ethnic specificity of Dedijer’s work anticipates his more recent, nationalist publications, as well as similar publications from each ethnic faction in Yugoslavia, which according to political scientists like Ivo Banac led to the outbreak of violence in the region. If we consider that some of the most extreme nationalist voices in Southeastern Europe came from inside Yugoslav universities, from people considered writers and intellectuals, then this explains the loss of faith in the intellectual myth of Central Europe. On the other hand, Kiš echoes Todorova in his conclusion that the concept only ever worked in its mythic dimensions, and any attempt to realize it was predestined to fail. However, Kiš goes beyond Todorova and other historians in suggesting that the basic task of collecting information to create a single, overarching, and coherent story—the *totality of the historic process* in Dedijer’s title—is an unrealizable endeavor, even if it is one we must continue to pursue. The question remains as to whether it is a coincidence that the two most prominent Southeastern Europeans in *Cross Currents* are the ones who deflate the myth of Central Europe. I continue my revision of Todorova’s statement that “Central Europeans are writing *against* Southeastern Europe” by answering that Central Europeans are writing *despite* the very real problems posed by Southeastern Europe, by the possibility of ethnic divide, and by the relativity of different historical accounts of the region. It is no coincidence that Kiš, who has access to both the Central European and

Southeastern European identities, would be the first of the “Central European intellectuals” to see those problems clearly. Finally, it is Kiš the postmodernist who points to the necessary violence in the relationship between the ideal and its practical application, and to the inability of the Central European myth to incorporate the reality of the Balkans as symptomatic of its inability to realize itself.

PART TWO

Further Essays in Contesting Geography
and Redefining Culture

Borders, Editors, and Readers in Motion*

The Need for New Geographies

The focus on *Cross Currents* in the chapters above leads us in a helpful direction, towards a history of the Transatlantic Central European political-cultural journal, particularly those examples that have taken on the political task of defining or redefining a culture. In this chapter, I will trace several such histories and describe the larger architecture of similar media systems; I offer here the greatest methodological diversity in the book, and therefore make the greatest conceptual demands on my reader. In order to move outside of the framework of *Cross Currents*, I suggest three possible experiments in viewing the political-cultural journal and how it has functioned as part of a larger cultural system which generates meanings and identities across borders.

The first of these involves an example of exile without movement, the journals produced by Hungarians living in the Kingdom of Hungary until the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 reassigned their territories to Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. As these writers and publishers found themselves outside their accustomed borders in the interwar period, their identity repositioned towards the nation and towards the West, and cultural production was born out of crisis and surrogacy. This dynamic links the first, synchronic analysis of extraterritorial Hungarians with a diachronic story of Polish émigré publishing that spans the inter-

* A portion of this chapter was previously published in Jessie Labov, "Re-reading *Kultura* from a Distance," in *Eastern Europe Unmapped: Beyond Borders and Peripheries*, ed. Irene Kacandes and Yuliya Komska (New York: Berghahn, 2017).

war, Second World War, and postwar periods. The second case I want to examine involves two editors who would eventually edit the two most important Polish émigré journals in the Cold War era: *Kultura* and *Wiadomości*. Their twin trajectories show how these two men spiraled around each other's politics and sensibilities, with *Kultura* firmly anchored in the relationship with the homeland, and *Wiadomości* suspended outside it.

In examining the work of both these Transylvanian Hungarian and Polish émigré publishers, my initial focus will be on printed manifestations of the editors' work: mission statements and open letters, editorial policies and gatekeeping. Then I move to a different methodological approach to the journal *Kultura*, opening up to a wider view of the cultural system around these political-cultural journals by looking at the implied readers and imagining the reach and impact of a cultural surrogate like *Kultura* in the homeland and beyond its borders. Using metadata about the location of *Kultura*'s authors, letter writers, funders, and those rejected by the journal, we can generate a different image of participation in this cultural system, mapping the concentric circles of audiences in Poland and in the diaspora, and how its reception shifted over time in reaction to key Cold War events. Taken together, these three approaches extend the claims made about *Cross Currents* and the nature of Central Europe as an entity imagined beyond its own borders, and ask detailed questions about the paths that people and texts travel once they leave the nation.

Interwar Hungary beyond Its Borders

A review of the impact of political-cultural journals on intellectual life in Central Europe must begin in the nineteenth century with these nations' struggles for independence from Russia, Prussia, and Austro-Hungary, when Romantic poets and writers served as significant figureheads for emancipatory movements, and often used weekly or monthly political journals as vehicles for their views. Freedom of the press under these imperial regimes became a litmus test of tolerance for revolutionary movements. Censorship and repression of dailies, journals, and unofficial

presses was the most common way to limit the political effectiveness of the opposition.⁶³

The Romantic gesture of self-determination is echoed in the founding statements of many political-cultural journals, particularly those produced outside their country of origin. The examples presented in this chapter reflect the impact of the Romantic disposition on different literary circles of the century that followed, when questions of national identity became central. What I want to add here to our understanding of this relationship is that the claim for self-determination need not rest solely on a nationalist argument. The idea of Central Europe articulated in *Cross Currents* was in opposition to Soviet imperialism, but not as a preamble to establishing a specific political entity, like a nation-state. When we look at interwar Hungary, we see a different emigration trajectory that gives us another model of cultural imagining, inspired by an absent nation.

In the following section I will be comparing three Hungarian-language Transylvanian journals (*Pásztortűz*, *Periszkóp*, and *Erdélyi Helikon*) with three journals also published by Hungarians, two living in extraterritorial minority pockets (2 × 2, Vienna, and *Új Magyarok*, Vienna/Bucharest), and one in Hungary but outside of Budapest (*Horizont*, Pécs).⁶⁴ To put Hungarian cultural actors in interwar Romania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia in the role of émigrés might seem unorthodox, but it serves a larger purpose in carrying out this thought experiment: are the conditions of creating culture outside the nation the same for those who do not move, but rather change nation-states as borders shift? Or simply for those outside of the cultural capital—in this case Budapest? In examining the mission statements of such journals, we see that while these texts are concerned with contemporary events, they are not explicitly political statements, but instead map an aesthetic territory with political subtexts. In the case of the Transylvanian journals, the authors often outline a clear relationship to the West, staking out a position that is as much an aesthetic statement as a geopolitical one, and in all cases referred to the influential

⁶³ See Goldstein 2000 for a comparative view of censorship in these three environments.

⁶⁴ There are several other compelling examples, including *Kalangya* and *Híd* published in Vojvodina in the 1930s, and the fascinating journal *Cultura* published in Romanian, Hungarian, German, and French starting in 1924.

turn-of-the-century journal *Nyugat* (West), which was at the forefront of a modernist bouleversement in Hungarian literature. The phenomenon of *Nyugat* in particular is a good example of my approach to this material, which is less about predicting political or literary movements than an analysis of the output of different intellectual circles (in cases of great isolation, the work of a single émigré).

The journals produced by Hungarians in Transylvania during the inter-war period examined here are not a comprehensive survey, but have been selected to illustrate a range of responses to the question of national identity brought on by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, and the significant shift in Hungary's borders. The shock and outrage provoked among Hungarians by this transfer of land from the defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire to a province of Romania cannot be exaggerated.⁶⁵ This issue dominated both domestic and foreign policy during Admiral Horthy's regime (1920–1944), much of the political life of the diaspora, and remains a contentious subject even today in domestic politics. Magyars in Transylvania (or *Erdély*, the Hungarian term for this region) found themselves “in exile” without leaving home, while exiles from Budapest who came to cities like Kolozsvár (present-day Cluj-Napoca) might even be seen as emigrants (e.g., László Dienes, the founder of *Korunk*).

After Trianon, Transylvanian Hungarians experienced a complete reversal of their status from where they had stood as majority subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary; they were now in the minority, as were those Hungarians living in the Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, in the newly formed Czechoslovakia, and abroad in Vienna, Paris, London, and the United States. Even in Budapest, the question of “what does it mean to be Hungarian?” became open to new interpretations,⁶⁶ and made the dilemma of redefining and sustaining Hungarian culture even more problematic for those isolated from its literary and intellectual capital. In addition to the new status of Transylvanian writers and intellectuals, it is worth noting the importance of Transylvania in the broader Hungarian

⁶⁵ For a comprehensive treatment of this event and its consequences, see Romsics (2002).

⁶⁶ See Balázs Trencsényi's foundational work *A nép lelke* (2011) on the debates about national characterology in Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria.

imagination. This mountainous region, isolated to the east, lies at the core of much Magyar legend and genealogical theory, reflecting on the one hand the mystical, Eastern origins of the Hungarian nationalist myth, and on the other a pastoral ideal—which images the region as untouched and undiluted by Turkish occupation during the Ottoman expansion, or by interaction with the West. In Hungary, the Romantic movement was just as linked to national consciousness as it was throughout Central Europe, and was particularly focused on this combination of the originary and the aboriginal among Transylvanian peasants.⁶⁷ Several heroes of the Romantic period are of Székely heritage (a particular group of Hungarians, also called Szeklers in English, with a distinct local identity living in Székelyföld, or southeastern Erdély).

While the town of Kolozsvár was never an equal to Budapest, it served as the Hungarian capital of this area. Before it was cut off from the rest of Hungary, Kolozsvár was one of the Transylvanian cosmopolitan towns that flourished in latter-day Austro-Hungary, like nearby Nagyvárad (Oradea) and Temesvár (Timișoara). The Transylvanian Hungarian population, like the German-speaking Saxons and Schwabs, lived primarily in the towns and accounted for a much larger percentage of the urban population than of the region as a whole.⁶⁸ Against this landscape, some towns in Transylvania saw an unprecedented explosion of Hungarian-language pamphlets, printing presses, and weekly and monthly journals in circulation—according to one estimate, more than forty in Kolozsvár alone (Czigány 1984, 399–417; Balázs 2006, 77–9).

From the outset, there were two rival explanations for this publishing boom. From the Hungarian point of view, this was the result of a minority culture struggling to stay alive under Romanian oppression. The Romanian answer is that under Austro-Hungarian rule the complex bureaucracy governing the printing and distribution of periodicals resulted in de facto

⁶⁷ For a series of key texts of Romanticism that connect the Hungarian experience with those of the surrounding countries, see Trencsényi and Kopeček (2007).

⁶⁸ *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, a study of ethnicity and nationality in Cluj/Kolozsvár by Rogers Brubaker, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox, and Liana Grancea, presents a remarkable and unbiased blend of sociology, anthropology, and history to account for ethnic difference without reifying either group as inherently nationalist.

ensorship, and the true freedom of the press allowed by the Romanian constitution accounted for the increased activity.⁶⁹ It is indisputable that after Trianon the Romanian authorities banned the distribution of any printed material imported from Hungary. Yet, at least initially, they did not interfere in the intellectual development and cultural production of Hungarians and other minorities living in Transylvania.

Buried in the centrifugal polemic between Hungarian and Romanian interests in Transylvania are two definitions of diversity. Two contemporary sources reveal the nature of this difference, as well as its implications for the extraterritorial literary world. Zsombor de Szász's pamphlet by a "Late Transylvanian Member of the Hungarian Parliament and of the Austro-Hungarian Delegations" shows his reactionary wish to return to a time when Hungarian Jews were solidly assimilated, where freedom meant choice of lifestyle. By point of contrast, the pseudonymous author Transylvanus's small-format book *The Ethnical Minorities of Transylvania* presents a progressive vision of a patchwork of united and liberated groups coexisting peacefully. Both views are presented facing West and share a very specific time and space of articulation, itself a reproduction and refraction of the debate within Transylvania, and within Romania and Hungary. Yet I would argue that these works share a logic with the act of publishing Hungarian cultural-political journals at the time in Transylvania, not least of which is the impulse we see in the Transylvanian Hungarian writers to reach outside of their sphere of reference to create a united, ethnic-national identity founded on a Transylvanian ideal of diversity.

⁶⁹ Rights and duties of minorities determined by the Treaty of Paris (December 9, 1919) and also by the Romanian Constitution (March 28, 1923) guaranteed freedom of consciousness, religion, confession, education, assembly, and association, as quoted by Zsombor de Szász: "Article 25—The Constitution guarantees to all persons freedom to communicate and to publish their ideas and opinions orally, in writing, and through the medium of the press, each individual being responsible for the abuse of these liberties in the cases laid down by the penal code, which cannot in any case restrict the right as such... No censorship or other preventive measure may be imposed on the issue, sale, or distribution of any publication whatever. No preliminary authorization is required from any public authority for the appearance of any publication whatever. ... No journal or publication may be suspended or suppressed" (Szász 1927, 13).

Pásztortűz (Cluj/Kolozsvár, 1921)

Sándor Reményik and Walter Gyula published the first issue of *Pásztortűz*, a literary, cultural, and political-science weekly, in 1921. The journal would continue to run without interruption throughout the interwar period, and through most of the Second World War. The term *pásztortűz* conjures a very specific image of the campfire set by shepherds in the mountains. The metaphorical use of this image for the name of the magazine is explained in a rustic yet poetic manner in the editors' opening "Manifesto." They imagine the Hungarian people are sitting around this campfire, looking up at the night sky, imagining poetic thoughts, and remembering folk poetry and songs. They explain that what is specific to the "Hungarian race" is the people's ability to tell stories, and use as an example János Arany's epic trilogy, *Toldi* (1847–1879), about a medieval hero from humble background who rises to become a knight in the king's court. The journal's stated goal was to preserve Hungarian traditions, to further the development of Hungarian knowledge and expression, and to *fight*, if necessary, against all sentiment and opinion foreign to that expression.

This statement of intent conveys a militant, siege-mentality nationalism, with much inspiration from the Romantic pastoral, as well as some liturgical echoes. The articles alternate between contemporary feuilleton ("The Transylvanian Hungarians and Hungarians as Guards of Western European Culture" by László Erdélyi), references to the medieval past ("Middle Age," a short story by Domokos Gyallay about barbarian attacks on Hungarian rural society), and allegoric poetry ("Jehosaphat," a sonnet by Lajos Áprily). As with other political-cultural journals under study here, *Pásztortűz* contains fiction and essays, poems, visual art, and even short plays. Yet its aesthetic position was more complex, from the very outset, than what strict right-wing nationalism and traditionalism would allow.

A glimpse of the journal's particular position can be found in an essay towards the end of this inaugural issue of *Pásztortűz*, "Új világ" (New world) by Arthur Balogh. Balogh writes in the first person, in a reflective tone more typical of a diary entry than an editorial essay. His worldview is profoundly democratic; for Balogh and the *Pásztortűz* circle, adherence

to tradition can only go so far, and one must continue to adapt to political changes in order to remain relevant. *Pásztortűz* did follow that mandate as it developed through the 1920s and 1930s under the stewardship of “cultural activist” Károly Kós (1883–1977), who would also found the Transylvanian Literary Guild in 1922, as well as a second journal, *Erdélyi Helikon*, in 1928.

The best phrase to describe Kós’s shared purpose with the intellectuals in his circle would be what Lóránt Czigány identifies as *irodalmi tudat* in his *Oxford History of Hungarian Literature*:

irodalmi tudat (“consciousness in literature”). First used by J. Erdélyi, a disciple of Hegel, (*irodalmi tudalom*, 1855), *irodalmi tudat* was conceived by J. Horváth (1908) as a device by which the idea of continuity in literature may conveniently be traced. Both tradition and innovation guarantee the growth of literature, but awareness of the accumulated traditions exists. This awareness is expressed in a healthy literary life, in which writers are not isolated, but have established contacts with one another and with their readers, and in which there is a framework for literary activity. *Irodalmi tudat* is a sense of belonging, of being part of a tradition. (1984, 537)

This *is* a deeply Hegelian concept, which allows for both a resolute cycle of history and the capacity to form institutions and human connections that affect that history. This notion fits well into the *Pásztortűz* mission, as the editors aimed to preserve both Hungarian tradition and creativity. In emigration, *irodalmi tudat* is necessarily a more vital element than in a native setting, where other institutions (especially those of higher education) are in place alongside literary circles and publishing houses. But can this “framework for literary activity” be held in place by just one movement, or must there be a dialogue in place between different possibilities for a healthy literary consciousness?

Periszkóp (*Arad, 1925*)

Just over 150 km away, in Arad, György Szántó founded “A Monthly Review of a New Type,” *Periszkóp* (Periscope), in 1925. At first glance, there are significant differences from *Pásztortűz*. While the cover sports a sketch of a (primordial Hungarian?) horseman, the journal’s content borders on the abstract, and is embedded in a constructivist design and bright, high-contrast design (see Fig. 11). The first pages are filled with equally stylized advertisements for local merchants, evidence of an early integration of futurist and *de Stijl* aesthetic with commercial interest. The title page lists among the editorial staff Budapest editor Árpád Szépál, editor Zoltán Fábry, and “cultural direction” by Géza Schiller and István Pál. Subscription prices are listed in Romanian, Hungarian, Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, German, Austrian, and American currencies. All these elements indicate an internationalist perspective. The mission statement describes the journal as having “the only right perspective, the ethical, in which *Periszkóp* appears in order to watch mankind’s ways and reflect them back to man himself”⁷⁰ (1925, 3).

In addition to using the figure of the periscope as an internationalist eye upon the world, two other allegorical meanings lurk behind the image: one, a group of avant-gardists submerged in a nonnative environment, setting up an instrument through which to (covertly) view the outside world, from Transylvania to the West; and two, the inverse of that scenario, an instrument through which a submerged readership can spy on the creative production of the Hungarian avant-

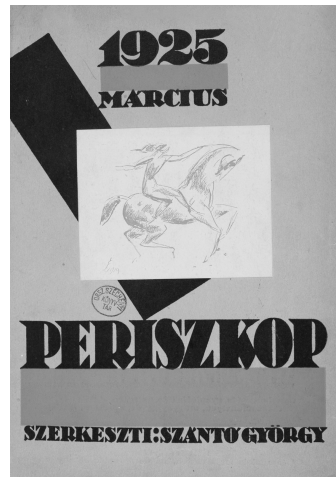


Figure 11. Front cover of the first issue of *Periszkóp* (1925).
(Courtesy of the National Széchényi Library, Budapest.)

⁷⁰ “Csakis az etika az a szemszög, ahonnan az utját követni lehet. Ebben a szemszögben bukkan fel a Periszkóp, hogy az ember utját figyelje. És hogy visszatükrözze magának az embernek.”

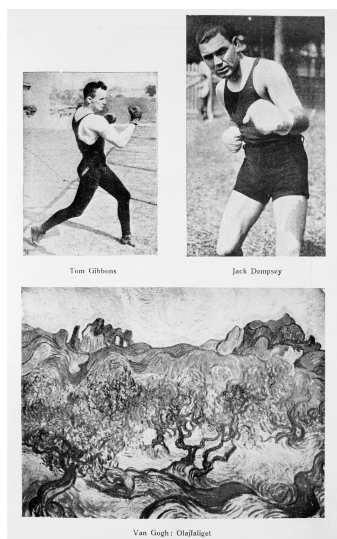


Figure 12. Illustration from the first issue of *Periszkóp* (1925), boxing heroes with a Van Gogh landscape. (Courtesy of the National Széchényi Library, Budapest.)

garde. The universalist interpretation prevails, given the written and visual contents of the journal. The international gallery in the first issue includes numerous photographs of film stars, literary heroes, and even the city of Moscow as a character of sorts. The spirit of collage is everywhere, particularly in the juxtaposition of photos of Jack Dempsey with impressionist art, neoclassical sculpture, and breakthroughs in industrial design (see Fig. 12). Beyond displaying a diversity of styles and nationalities, the journal is devoted to avant-garde *celebrity*, be it local (Kassák), elite (Cendrars), foreign (Archipenko), or popular (lightly dressed eighteen-year-old revue star Iris Loraine). While Reményik placed himself firmly within a hierarchy of German high culture through his conversation with

Beethoven, Szántó and his circle create a whirlpool of European and American high and low culture, and confidently place themselves in the center.

Erdélyi Helikon (*Cluj/Kolozsvár*, 1928)

Károly Kós, an advocate of fostering a particular Transylvanian cultural identity who organized much of the literary life in Kolozsvár, edited *Erdélyi Helikon* simultaneously with *Páosztortűz*. His book *Erdély: kultúr-történeti vázlat* (Transylvania: an outline of cultural history, 1929) laid out the main tenets of the literary movement and the way of life specific to Transylvanian culture as he saw it. The Transylvanian Literary Guild provided a new momentum to publish Transylvanian Hungarian books. Unlike *Periszkóp*, which seems to have drawn much of its funding from advertising, Kós's projects were supported by a faithful cadre of upper-

class book subscribers with an interest in sustaining Hungarian culture. One of these was the baron János Kemény (1903–1971), director of the Kolozsvár National Theatre, who sponsored a writers' cooperative in 1926 known as the Erdélyi Helikon (Czigány 1984, 400). Two years later, Miklós Kisbán and Lajos Áprily became coeditors of the journal of the same name. While this group consisted of many of the same writers published in *Pásztortűz*, it had a more subtle message of Transylvanian *irodalmi tudat*. The *helikon* is a neo-classical image, a Greek tower with a spiral structure, and the mission statement of the first issue elaborates on its significance. In his preface to the first issue, Lajos Áprily states that they do not care about manifestos and do not want to be in the business of persuasion. The sole principle they are willing to argue for is to stand against discrimination, to show that being Transylvanian does not mean being narrow-minded, but rather looking at the world from the roof: a world-watching *helikon*. This group of writers argues with the word “Transylvanian” only out of a desire to protect the consciousness and mission of the *helikon* from narrow interests.

The essay “Ten Years,” which immediately follows Áprily's preface and refers to the ten years that had passed since Romanian troops entered Transylvania at the end of the First World War, is a cultural survey of that period in Transylvania, and the state of the *irodalmi tudat*. Its author, Aladár Kuncz (1886–1931), was a Hungarian writer who lived in Paris before war broke out and was held captive in a French prison for five years. After returning to Hungary, he traveled around, seeking a literary milieu, which he ultimately found in his hometown of Kolozsvár (Czigány 1984, 299). “Ten Years” draws some far-reaching conclusions about the interaction of different literary trends with life in emigration (Kuncz 1928). After a few years of relative silence, Kuncz writes, some small groups of young writers emerged around Kolozsvár, some “waving the flag” of Hungarian culture and producing populist, accessible literature (by which he means *Pásztortűz* and its imitators), and others experimenting with pan-European fashions and producing Western, avant-gardist literature (here he is referring to *Periszkóp* and similar journals). In either case, Kuncz found a certain freedom and creativity in Kolozsvár that he had not found in Budapest, where the literary establishment was preoccupied with rebuilding a Hungarian national

literature. Transylvanian Hungarian literature, according to Kuncz, was free from this task, and could be more open to new movements in Europe and the world. His conclusion is that minority art, whether ethnic or avant-gardist, is stronger than art created by the majority. Kuncz represents both a Western opinion and a native one, and his election of Transylvania as his preferred venue for creative work correlates with his larger point.

Kuncz argues for a minor literature, which the *Helikon* group would wholeheartedly support, not least because it reassures them in their mission, and privileges Transylvanian literary production above what is coming out of the capital Budapest. The Kolozsvár/Cluj–Arad–Temesvár/Timișoara triangle is one of the emblematically diverse areas of the region, and one that has stood in at times as a microcosm of the myth of peaceful coexistence in Central Europe, as well as a sure reminder of the possibility of fracture and conflict that lie beneath the myth.

2 × 2 (*Vienna*, 1922), Horizont (*Pécs*, 1925),
Új Magyarok (*Vienna/Bucharest*, 1932)

The three journals I have selected from other locations parallel the time frame and aesthetic preoccupations of *Páosztortűz*, *Periszkóp*, and *Erdélyi Helikon*. The question that remains is whether a successful *irodalmi tudat* was more easily formed in less isolated and more transitory emigrations than that which we saw in Transylvania, and whether the same impulse was present in Hungary outside of Budapest. 2 × 2 is one of a series of avant-garde journals that served as a vehicle for Lajos Kassák's particular blend of Dadaism, pacifism, and Gombrowiczian individualism.⁷¹ (Kassák was the leading figure of the Hungarian avant-garde, most internationally recognized both in his time and today.) A few years later in Pécs, which was outside of the cosmopolitan capital and not far from the Yugoslav

⁷¹ Before he was forced into exile for his open non-conformity to Béla Kun's socialist mandates, Kassák published *A Tett* (Action, 1915–1916) and *Ma* (Today, 1916–1926), the latter of which he continued in emigration. In Vienna, he followed *Ma* with *Dokumentum* (Document, 1926–1927) and then *Munka* (Work, 1928–1939) (Czigány 1984, 345).

border, Ferenc Benedek published *Horizont*, a journal of “Thoughts, Writings, Studies,” which had a more traditional presentation and consisted mostly of essays about Hungarian literature, short stories, and poems. When brothers Samu and Georg Fényes started the monthly *Új Magyarok* (The new Hungarians) in November 1931, they gave Vienna as the site where it was printed, although its editorial and publishing offices had an address in Bratislava. Within two years, the magazine had relocated (with Fényes) to Bucharest. This monthly signals a different displacement than that of Kassák in Vienna or Kós in Transylvania; instead of Western European currencies, the price is given in Czechoslovak korunas, Romanian lei, and Yugoslav dinars.

Initially, 2×2 looks very similar to *Periszkóp* in its kaleidoscope of avant-garde text and image. Its visual aesthetic is also based on constructivist design, although it is much more consistent, and it does not have advertisements designed with geometric abstractions. 2×2 is on the whole more consistent as a project than *Periszkóp*. Where the mission of *Periszkóp* was (in editor Szántó’s own words) to reflect the ways of humankind back onto itself—to provide a cubist, refracted image of Western art—Kassák played more the role of a demiurge. He produced, created, and designed his own cultural milieu, both in Budapest and in Vienna. In the first issue of 2×2 , Kassák prints what became his most famous poem, “The horse dies the birds fly away” (see Fig. 13). The poem, like Kassák, is an idiosyncratic amalgam. It is epic in intent, a chronicle of his journey from Budapest to Paris, and then back to Budapest; it is Dadaist, written in free verse, full of sounds and syllables and onomatopoeic hisses; Kassák intercalates two full-page constructivist illustrations he has drawn himself among its eight pages of text. Over the course of the work, the poet travels from one stage of life to another, across several countries and political ideologies, and builds a confident and unique worldview. Towards the end of the poem, this identity is expressed in a variety of ways. One is the line “ $2 \times 2 = 4$,” an insistence on fact in the face of idealism (the line that directly precedes it reads “miracles reach me bearded and unfixed”⁷²). Another expression of self-knowledge is found in the con-

⁷² “Hozzám szakállasan és vakolatlan érnek el a csodák” (Kassák 1922, 22).

cluding two lines of the poem: “I am LAJOS KASSÁK / and our heads twist up for the flight of the nickel samovar.”⁷³ As László Ferenczi notes, no proper names used throughout the poem are even capitalized, which renders Kassák’s upper-case name all the more mythic when we arrive at the end (Ferenczi 1996, 143). This is one man’s version of an entire *irodalmi tudat*, buffeted by historical context, strongly socialist, but so stridently individual that he was unable to reconcile himself with any one state power at this point in 1922.



Figure 13. Excerpt from the first issue of *2 x 2* (1922), first page of Lajos Kassák’s poem “The horse dies [and] the birds fly away.” (Courtesy of the National Széchényi Library, Budapest.)

⁷³ “Én KASSÁK LAJOS vagyok / s fejünk fölött elröpül a nikkel samovár” (23).

In addition to the international entries by Alexander Archipenko, Jean Cocteau, August Stramm, and Jean Epstein's piece on Freud, there are two review articles at the end of the first issue, one on contemporary Russian literature, and another on Western European literature. Of particular interest in the latter is the attention paid to other journals. After short critiques of Tristan Tzara's *Cinéma calendrier du coeur abstrait* and Paul Neuhuys's *Le canari et la cerise*, Endre Gáspár reviews new issues of seven avant-garde journals from around Europe: *Ça ira* (May 1922); *La vie des lettres et des arts* 8 (10); *Les feuilles libres* (April–May 1922); *L'esprit nouveau* 17 (1922); *Der Sturm* 13 (7–8); *Secession* 1 (2) (American); *The Broom* 1 (4) (British). In this company, *2 × 2* appears as a vital part of an international movement, not simply a conduit for information from West to East, or a reflection of the West back onto itself as *Periszkóp* presents its mission. Several of the journals discussed ran pieces by Kassák and his circle in this period.

The last two journals I would like to consider, *Horizont* and *Új Magyarok*, present a different view of the world, one that is also optimistic but within a much more conservative tradition. *Horizont* bears a simple and classical design, listing its contents on the cover, much like an academic publication. Benedek's inaugural letter to his readers (written in the first person plural) describes the now-familiar landscape after battle, a destroyed and disillusioned world with only one clear horizon: scientific inquiry. *Horizont* offers its readers a straightforward continuum from the Enlightenment tradition, where literature consists of voyages of discovery and progress, satire, didactic essays and plays, and formally rigorous verse: "We know our readers are cynical, yes, go on smiling, but we still believe in a fanatic way that there is another world, not only the one we are bound to live in at this time. ... Try to read with laughing eyes what we are writing for you. ... The actual world is a tragic parody of what it should be" (Benedek 1925, 1).

Within this issue one finds an essay by Sándor Keresztury, "Letters from Mont Blanc," on whether people are capable of learning to think collectively, or only individually. It is a report from a conference in Paris in 1925 spelling the end of Europe, which featured speeches by Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw, and Upton Sinclair. There is also a review of

Hungarian literature in Transylvania by Dezső Szűcs. The attention to Transylvanian literature is not unusual at this time, and coming from inside Hungary (Pécs is a small but culturally vital city in southwestern Hungary), it reads as a reminder of what has gone wrong with the world, rather than as a clear path to a new *irodalmi tudat*. Benedek does not question the existence of a Hungarian literary consciousness, but instead he is interested in how to understand what has happened and set events within a scientific framework.

Új Magyarok is a more expressly political journal, focused on essays of political analysis, with occasional excerpts from novels and other prose works. Every issue contains a report on the “New Hungarians,” a concept that exists outside as well as inside Hungary’s borders. This idea is exercised by the journal’s own migration from Vienna to Bratislava and then to Bucharest. Publishers Samu and Georg Fényes claimed that Hungarian culture becomes stronger when forced outside state borders, an argument reminiscent of the views expressed in *Erdélyi Helikon* about minority versus majority art. An editorial essay in the 1934 *Új Magyarok* looks back critically at the history of Hungary under Maria Theresa’s rule, and rejects the struggles of a Hungarian independence as a model. Instead, the Fényes brothers see ethnic, stateless Hungarians as one of many ethnic groups influencing the future of Europe, something they write about with concern. Given that the journal does not make a strong aesthetic stance, its claim for Hungarian culture on the northern and eastern margins of the nation seems less tied to a literary consciousness and more to the cause of resisting a homogenizing fascism, which was already being strongly felt by those watching pan-European developments.

What distinctions can we draw, then, between the three journals published in Transylvania and the three journals published in Vienna, Pécs, and Bucharest? All of the literary circles in which they circulated interacted with the same interwar tides and eddies of socialism, fascism, nationalism, and conservatism. But where an attention to a specific Transylvanian identity stands in for a historical grievance in *Horizont* and *Új Magyarok* (the concept is markedly absent from 2×2), it seems to transgress that complaint in Transylvania itself, and stand for a new, progressive culture. From this perspective, the three journals *Pásztortűz*, *Periszkóp*, and *Erdélyi Helikon*

can be understood as diverging and intersecting branches of a coherent Transylvanian literary tradition, in addition to being independent examples of minority culture. Over their decade of coexistence, the three journals shared many contributors, as did dozens of other similar publications in Cluj/Kolozsvár, Arad, and Timișoara/Temesvár. There was a loose dialogue among them, and with literary and political trends of interwar Eastern and Western Europe. This is not the case with journals that arise from other emigrations, and differs greatly from the censored and self-censored conversations taking place within Hungary itself.

Giedroyc and Grydzewski, Part I: Parallel Routes from Independence through War

When we speak of a national culture that has existed “outside of the boundaries of the state”—and in the case of Transatlantic Central Europe this idea is linked to specific time periods—we refer to an intellectual tradition that has remained active, or to a literary movement that has been kept in circulation. In this section, I would like to examine the case of Polish culture, how that cultural identity was created in emigration and how its intellectual tradition was maintained. While several names of Polish émigré literature—Miłosz, Gombrowicz, Barańczak—are familiar, it is less understood *why* those names became familiar, or rather, why we think of them as a group, in dialogue with each other, although they were separated by thousands of miles. The Transylvanian Hungarian writers above see their dialogue as occurring within a clear geographic logic. In the parallel interwar period in Polish history, and in turn-of-the-century Europe, the literary café arises as an institution that can foster literary circles. But in the postwar emigration, there is no longer a café that can serve as a central gathering place (like the Cafés Ziemiańska, Zodiak, or Pod Pikadorem in interwar Poland). Cafés were the spawning grounds for the very forms of the newspaper, the journal, and the periodical.⁷⁴ Journals—dailies, week-

⁷⁴ See, for example, chapter two (on authorship) in Stallybrass and White 1986. This is a more material and restrained claim than similar arguments by Jürgen Habermas about the origins of the public sphere.

lies, monthlies, quarterlies, even yearbooks—take the place of the communal *kawiarnia* in émigré communities.

A student of Polish or Central European literature on the North American continent is most likely to first encounter the journals *Kultura* and *Wiadomości* through Gombrowicz and Miłosz. Gombrowicz's *Diary* was first published in *Kultura*, in installments beginning in 1957. But *Kultura* was not just the vehicle of transmission for Gombrowicz's work; it was also in part its subject. Scanning the first year of his *Diary*, one sees that more than a third of the entries begin with references to *Kultura*, *Wiadomości*, *Orzeł Biały*, and other émigré journals: "Thursday. Lechoń's article entitled 'Polish Literature and Literature in Poland' in *Wiadomości*" (1988, 4); "Saturday. From B. T.'s article in *W*" (1988, 9); "Tuesday. Another review, this time in *Orzeł Biały*" (1988, 21). This is emblematic of the émigré journal's essay, feuilleton, *publicystyka*: they are meant to serve as a starting point for discussion.

Every so often, Gombrowicz records a self-consciously mundane detail of life, such as "Monday. I ate a tasty fish" (1989, 227), in the midst of his more arcane polemics about literature or philosophy. The references to articles in émigré journals can be seen in a similar light, in that they ground the reader in his unmistakable (and inescapable) physicality. Gombrowicz has to eat, he has to drink, he buys shoes, he holds a piece of paper in his hand that links him to an ever-widening diaspora. In the context of *Diary*, they link Gombrowicz's daily life in Argentina with his diaspora polemics, his physical reality with his mental chain of associations (and this is not such a straightforward process for the creator of Philifor and Philimor). The physical trail left in émigré journals, printings and reprintings of letters, ripostes, lectures, and responses—that is how we, too, experience the transcontinental coffee-house discussion that took place just after the Second World War, separated now by time as well as distance.

Once safely transported back, however, how are we to use this dialogic approach to further our understanding of how Polish culture is created in emigration and how this differs from the Transylvanian case? Isolated emigration (at times synonymous with "exile") can be used as a control, or a ground zero, for identity construction, and we can better understand the nature of a category like "the split identity," or "cultural production" once

layers of national history, genealogy, and geography are stripped away. (Gombrowicz himself uses this paradigm at times, before subverting it for some other purpose.) I argue against this ground zero in the Polish case, where the émigré publishing world was dominated by two men who began their careers in the interwar years in Warsaw: Jerzy Giedroyc and Mieczysław Grydzewski.

This prosopography begins, therefore, between the wars, because the shape of Polish culture in emigration was determined as much by Giedroyc and Grydzewski's tangled biographies as by "the condition we call exile." By the end of the independence period in 1939, the two men had become anchors of their respective milieus: Grydzewski as editor of the literary monthly *Skamander* and the weekly *Wiadomości Literackie* (Literary news), Giedroyc as editor of the political journals *Bunt Młodych* (Youth rebellion) and *Polityka*. The role they played differed from the standard charismatic leader, or flamboyant frontman with an entourage like some of the most eccentric performers at the literary cafés (Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, commonly known as Witkacy, comes to mind). I would like to consider the editor as part participant, part observer, and part invisible dictator, an influence often overlooked in literary or political histories. The influence of a Lajos Kassák, for example, on the artistic careers of more successful colleagues like László Moholy-Nagy and Victor Vasarely goes largely unnoticed (Czigány 1984, 345). Similarly, in Miłosz's 1969 *History of Polish Literature*, neither Grydzewski nor Giedroyc are mentioned in reference to interwar literature, even though Miłosz knew both and was published in their journals. About ten years after Miłosz's history came out, Marcin Król published a close study of "the style of political thinking around *Bunt Młodych* and *Polityka*," in which he acknowledges Giedroyc's role as facilitator of the journal, but ascribes the real dynamism of political thought to the journal's contributors—Adolf Bocheński, Jan Frankowski, Ksawery Pruszyński, and later, Stefan Kisielewski (Król 1997). This is only natural, as Król analyzes the content of the *publicystyka* (political journalism) in the journal, essay by essay; likewise, Miłosz discusses the novelists and poets in anthologies.

The presence of these editors is perhaps more detectable in the titles of such studies: *Kultura i jej krąg* (Culture and its circle); *Wiadomości i ich*

krąg (*Wiadomości* and its circle); *Wiadomości i okolice* (*Wiadomości* and its environs); and Król's study mentioned above. There is a sphere of influence that emanates from these publications, a circle of writers, friends, and intellectuals. And it is the editor who draws people into this circle, and who sometimes keeps others out. Grydzewski's and Giedroyc's roles in this capacity were much less obvious in the interwar context than in the post-war one.

Interwar Poland

Grydzewski, in particular, worked behind the scenes of the Skamander group, creating and editing the journals that provided a canvas for the elegant neoclassicism of Julian Tuwim, Antoni Słonimski, Kazimierz Wierzyński, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, and Jan Lechoń. These five poets were the *pikadorczycy*, habitués of the café Pod Pikadorem (Under the Pikador), and they were widely known in 1920s and 1930s Poland for their shared aesthetics and dynamic self-invention. Grydzewski, as a draftsman rather than a ringmaster, was in the margins of this group. In Wierzyński's words, he was "the owner of the whole stable" (Grydzewski 1997, 5); in Słonimski's *Alfabet wspomnień* (Alphabet of memories) he writes of Grydzewski: "He wasn't just our editor, but our friend, our adorer, the enthusiast of our success. . . . He corrected our manuscripts, proofread, he didn't just meddle with our work, he also tried to edit our lives. . . . We loved him, and we teased him horribly."⁷⁵ The *pikadorczycy* metamorphosed into the Skamander group—named for the Skamander River of ancient Troy, an allusion to Wyspiański's symbolist drama *Akropolis*, as well as another neoclassical reference. They were deeply committed to affirming the greatness of Polish culture, but did not set out an agenda beyond that. From their manifesto, in the first issue of *Skamander*: "We believe deeply in the present. . . . We

⁷⁵ "Był nie tylko naszym redaktorem, ale przyjacielem, adoratem, kibicem naszych sukcesów. . . . Poprawiał rękopisy, robił korektę, wtrącał się nie tylko do naszych utworów, ale próbował redagować nasze życie. . . . Kochaliśmy go i dokuczali obrzydliwie" (quoted in Grydzewski 1997, 5–6; all translations mine unless otherwise noted).

want to be poets of the present day and this is our faith and our whole 'plan.' We are not tempted by preaching, we do not want to convert anyone, but we want to conquer, to thrill, to enkindle human hearts" (quoted in Bird 1973, 106–8; translated by Beata Waller). Their stance was an aesthetic one, and they eschewed both avant-garde and socialist approaches to literature because they disdained doctrine. While *Skamander* primarily contained poems, plays, and short fiction, the business of literary life was conducted in *Wiadomości Literackie*, which Grydzewski started in 1924, two years after taking over as editor of *Skamander*. Over the next fifteen years, this journal became one of the loudest literary voices in interwar Poland, and reached an audience far beyond *Skamander*'s readership. Grydzewski's liberal editorial approach stood in contrast to his rather strict aesthetic point of view; as a result, this journal, while still staunchly traditional, reflected a wide range of leftist sentiment.⁷⁶

Giedroyc's prewar career was more political than literary. He was born a generation after Grydzewski, into a family of landed gentry from the *Kresy*, or eastern borderlands, now part of Ukraine. Whatever this landscape might have meant for a young man a few decades earlier, Giedroyc's coming-of-age coincided with Poland's independence, and he enlisted at the age of fourteen as a communications clerk in the Russo-Polish war of 1920 (Kowalczyk 1999, 8). This experience made a strong impression on him, and soon after he found his political and editorial voice as a law student at the University of Warsaw, and joined the executive committee of a small neoconservative party, the *Myśl Mocarstwowa* (Imperial thought) (Król 1979, 9–11). In the early 1930s he divided his time between the journal *Bunt Młodych—niezależny organ młodej inteligencji* (Youth rebellion—independent organ of the young intelligentsia) and his job as a civil servant. He moved around within the government bureaucracy, beginning in the

⁷⁶ In Gombrowicz's view, this and other prominent interwar journals almost consumed the literary world they were trying to promote: "In reality (what a dangerous word!), the literature of our period was being born as literary publicism. It looked as if literary journals (*Wiadomości* and *Prosto z Mostu*) were supposed to serve writers and their writing; but in reality writers existed so that the weekly, the only real literature of that time, could nourish itself on them. Was this an unavoidable process that was taking place in the whole world? Or the consequence of the weakening of the Polish 'I,' the 'I' that is the basis of creation?" (1989, 165).

Ministry of Agriculture, then, after falling out of favor with the director, moving to the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

The worlds of politics and *publicystyka* were closely related for Giedroyc. An issue that concerned him, such as Polish relations with Ukrainian nationalists in Eastern Galicia, would appear first on his agenda as an administrator, and then as a feuilleton in the pages of his journal. Out of this interest in things Eastern, he frequented a circle of Russian émigrés living in Warsaw, where he met Dmitri Filosov and Józef Czapski.⁷⁷ In 1937 Giedroyc's biweekly *Bunt Młodych* became *Polityka* (Król 1979, 13), and its polemic with the Socialist and National Democratic Parties increased in volume. In 1938, the group around *Polityka* published a collective work, *Polska idea imperialna* (The Polish imperial idea), which described the current state of false party demagoguery and misguided economic strategies, a program to overcome Polish-Ukrainian antagonisms, and a contentious solution to "the Jewish question" in the form of a mass emigration to Palestine. The driving force behind most of these arguments (however misguided some of them are in hindsight) was the right to self-rule; because of this, Król argues, we should understand the word *mocarstwowość* (imperialness) was meant in a different context than we would use it today.

For now, let's just say that the postulate "mocarstwowość" meant only the following assumption: the creation of a strong state is the only way to protect the Polish right to existence between two great powers. "Imperialism," this was no stirring dream about colonies, nor any kind of imperialism as we understand it today, but the expression of a conviction, and not a totally naive one, that in order to preserve its independence, Poland must be "an imperium"—that is, a large, strong state.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ For a detailed and well-illustrated portrait of Giedroyc at this age, see Kowalczyk (1999, chapter one). Also see Snyder (2003, 218–20).

⁷⁸ "Teraz, powiedzmy tylko tyle, że postulat 'mocarstwowości' oznaczał jedynie założenie następujące: stworzenie silnego państwa jest jedynym sposobem ochrony racji istnienia Polski między dwiema wielkimi potęgami. 'Imperializm'—to nie było wzruszające marzenie o koloniach, ani jakikolwiek imperializm, tak jak go dzisiaj pojmujemy, ale wyraz przekonania—nie całkiem przecież naiwnego, że Polska, jeśli ma

From the first issue of *Bunt Młodych*, Giedroyc instituted an ongoing polemic with *Wiadomości Literackie*; as strange as it may seem, Giedroyc's political journal virtually defined itself in opposition to Grydzewski's literary one. In his recent biography of Giedroyc, Andrzej Kowalczyk suggests that this largely unilateral attack was due in some part to a generational difference, and that the young writers of *Bunt Młodych* (most of whom ascribed to the *Myśl Mocarstwowa* as well) perceived the "liberalism, pacifism, eclecticism, and leftist sympathy" of Grydzewski's journal as symptomatic of the "weak spirit and disorientation of the older generation" (1999, 44).

Although it was true that the general tone of *Wiadomości Literackie* was more ceremoniously aesthetic than prophetic, beginning in 1926 Grydzewski inserted a project of his own in the form of a monthly supplement, *La Pologne littéraire*, which ran until 1936. Years later, Jan Błoński puzzled over this phenomenon—a multilingual presentation of the literature of Poland to the rest of Europe (mostly written in French, with pieces later in English, German, and Italian): an attempt to "take part" in the international cosmopolitanism of the era, and for Polish literature to regain its rightful place in the European sphere. The supplement was in fact modeled on a popular Parisian weekly, *Les Nouvelles littéraires* (Błoński 1990, 264). It is worth noting here that Grydzewski was reaching to the West, countering the stream of influence from Paris to Warsaw with a dissemination of his own. One might even see it as a literary predecessor of Giedroyc's interwar "imperialism," an effort to strengthen the state of Polish culture on a European stage, and to expand its influence. The paradox here, as Błoński points out, is that for all the cosmopolitanism of the gesture, the content of *La Pologne littéraire* was almost completely drawn from the Young Poland movement and what came before. In other words, Grydzewski engaged in a canonizing project at the same time as he was breaching borders in the name of modernism (and the impulse is understandable, from an aesthetically conservative point of view—why broadcast anything but great masters of Polish prose and verse?). The "friend and manager" of

zachować niepodległość, musi być 'imperium,' czyli dużym, silnym państwem" (Król 1979, 9–10).

the Skamandrites did not include them in his international review. Paris, busy with its own surplus of avant-gardisms, paid little attention to this foreign-language publication. Błoński's conclusion suggests a Gombrowiczian "psychodrama": "The Pole wants to please the Frenchman. He knocks on the door, dressed up as he has learned: sword of Sobieski in hand, *Poems* of Mickiewicz under his arm, a melody of Chopin on his lips. Seeing that the gate is not raised, he changes tactics"⁷⁹ (1990, 270). From this point, Grydzewski wears all of the attributes of Parisian modernism ("clumsily gathered during his voyages"), and reflects it back from the mirror of Warsaw: a man of the West.

Two wartime odysseys

During the war, Grydzewski went west, and Giedroyc went east.⁸⁰ Giedroyc had wanted to go west as well, but ended up in Budapest as the personal secretary to the Polish ambassador, where he was able to receive several Polish journals that continued publication during the war, including Grydzewski's *Wiadomości Polskie* (cf. Supruniuk 1995, 138). Over the next three to five years, Giedroyc traveled around the Near and Middle East, where he met several of his future colleagues at *Kultura*, including Zofia and Zygmunt Hertz and Juliusz Mieroszewski. He worked on the *Orzeł Biały* with Józef Czapski, and became the head press officer of General Anders's Army. At the close of the war, he ended up in Rome, where together with Czapski, the Hertzes, and Gustaw Herling-Grudziński he established the Instytut Literacki and eventually published *Kultura*.

Grydzewski served a similar role on the other side of Europe, working resolutely to publish news and propaganda for the Polish government in exile despite minimal resources. After *Wiadomości Literackie* folded in September 1939, Grydzewski managed to revive the project as *Wiadomości*

⁷⁹ "Polak chce spodobać się Francuzowi. Puka więc do drzwi, wystrojony jak umie: z mieczem Sobieskiego w ręku, *Poezjami* Mickiewicza pod pachą, melodią Chopina na ustach. Widząc, że wrota nie chcą się uchylić, zmienia taktykę."

⁸⁰ For a full description of Giedroyc's activities during the war, see Kowalczyk (1999, chapter two). For Grydzewski, see Supruniuk (1994, 1–15).

Polskie in Paris by November. He had to suspend publication again when France was occupied in June 1940, but started over a few months later in London. *Wiadomości Polskie* was entirely subsidized by the British defense department (as *Orzeł Biały* was funded by Anders), and in the spring of 1944 this support was withdrawn because the weekly was deemed too anti-Soviet. For two years Grydzewski worked on other projects: anthologies of Polish culture; a volume commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Kościuszko Uprising (in which he quietly referenced parallels to the Warsaw Uprising only six months before); the first few volumes of a series entitled *Biblioteka Wczoraj i Dziś* (The library of yesterday and today). Describing the period while *Wiadomości Polskie* was on hiatus, Rafał Habielski points out that for the émigrés living in London the first year after the war was in many ways harder than the war years themselves (1991, 62). The community was in a sense “demobilized,” almost as if it had been a unit fighting at the front that was no longer needed. Most of the institutions of the government-in-exile held in place by wartime subsidies disappeared overnight, and tens of thousands of displaced and migrant Poles appeared on the doorsteps of their families and friends, on their way either east or west. Meanwhile, local opportunities for work went to British soldiers returning from the war. The fact that Grydzewski continued his publishing efforts under these conditions—in the same canonizing mode as in *La Pologne littéraire*—is evidence of his conviction, his stubborn belief that literature was as fundamental to existence as the daily news. By mid-1946, *Wiadomości* started up again, this time without *Literackie* or *Polskie* in the title, thanks to a two-year grant from the British government arranged with the help of Adam Pragier (Habielski 1991, 62–63).

In his capacity as Minister of Intelligence of the Polish government-in-exile, Pragier was also responsible for bringing Giedroyc to London late in 1944, to direct the Department on Continental Affairs. While in London, Giedroyc was able to convince the government-in-exile of the value of establishing his Instytut Literacki, but was unable to secure funding for it. This is where the idea of a privately funded, independent press took root. Giedroyc was sent back to Rome in late 1945 with a “mandate” to found an institute in the name of the Polish government, and even received an

official order from General Anders to carry out this task. Financial support then followed in the form of private donations from the soldiers and officers of Anders's Second Corps. The rest of the funding for the first year of the institute's existence came in the form of postwar *kombinacja*.⁸¹ One of the first volumes (apocryphally, *the* first volume) to appear was Mickiewicz's messianic work *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* (*The Books and the Pilgrimage of the Polish Nation*); also published that first year were a series of classic nineteenth-century Polish novels, an anthology of wartime short stories, a collection of essays on the war, and more. The initial direction of the press was not that different from Grydzewski's inclinations during the same period.

If the achievement of the 1946 *Wiadomości* was its continuity through the interwar period and through the Second World War with several changes of locale, then the achievement of the first issue of *Kultura* was its unusual claim to independence, with its private funding and its state of rootlessness. *Wiadomości* more or less continued where *Wiadomości Literackie* had left off, but *Kultura*, as a new publication, began with an essay about the current crisis in European civilization. Within the text of the essay, Poland is not even directly mentioned. Instead, we find statements by Paul Valéry (in 1919), Benedetto Croce, and André Malraux (1946) about the state of Europe after two world wars. At the end of the two-page preface, the goals of *Kultura* are clearly set out, including its intentions towards its divided audience of Polish readers:

Kultura wants to bring home to the Polish readers, who, having chosen political emigration, find themselves beyond the borders of their native country, that the cultural circle in which they live is not an extinct one.

⁸¹ "On the advice of General Wiśniowski, the Instytut obtained a significant amount of gasoline, a priceless commodity after the war. This trade in gasoline was the result of the fortuitous cooperation of a certain former monastery in a suburb of Rome, where fuel was stored. 'The shipments of gasoline by truck'—remembers Zofia Hertz—"took place at night in the woods, taking the greatest of precautions, since this was, after all, the black market.' The profit from this monastery-publishing house speculation provided the paper and ink which was used to publish the first books of the institute" (Kowalczyk 1999, 70–71; my translation).

Kultura wants to reach the readers in Poland and strengthen their belief that the values which are dear to them have not yet collapsed under the outbreak of brute force.

Kultura wants to seek in the civilized Western world this “will to live, without which the European will die out like the leaders of so many layers of ancient empires before us.”⁸² (Giedroyc 1947, 2)

Instead of taking on the task of self-consciously presenting Polish culture to the West, Giedroyc and his colleagues decided that *Kultura* would be a working part of European culture as a whole, that it could offer some answers to the shared crisis of culture that could not be found in Italy, France, or England. Both this mission statement and the above list of goals show traces of prewar Giedroyc, except that the critical strength of the Polish “imperium” now applies to Western values pitted against those dominant in the East.

Over the next twenty years, the paths of the two journals would diverge further, and enact their editors’ interwar polarization. It is worth noting that Giedroyc and Grydzewski enter the world stage from the same cultural landscape of independent Poland, and that they shared a drive to publish as a means of self-determination and self-definition that grew directly out of that world. What happens to that drive to publish in emigration? Because of the logistics of the war, neither Giedroyc nor Grydzewski experienced a sudden rupture from their native language, audience, direct circles of friends, or, even more importantly, institutions that could offer support to their publishing enterprises. In this way, their situation did follow the pattern for the generations of Central European émigrés that followed. What stands out from Giedroyc and Grydzewski’s common experience is the shared belief in the periodical publication as a cohering force for an audience dispersed across borders and oceans. This belief pre-

⁸² “*Kultura* pragnie uprzytomnić czytelnikom polskim, którzy wybrawszy emigrację polityczną znaleźli się poza granicami kraju ojczystego, że krąg kulturalny w którym żyją, nie jest kręgiem wymarłym. *Kultura* pragnie dotrzeć do czytelników polskich w kraju i wzmóc w nich wiarę, że wartości, które są im bliskie nie zawaliły się jeszcze pod obuchem nagiej siły. *Kultura* chce szukać w świecie cywilizacji zachodniej tej ‘woli życia, bez której Europejczyk umrze tak jak umarły niegdyś kierownicze warstwy dawnych imperiów.’”

dates interwar Poland and can be traced to the spiritual inheritance handed down from the nineteenth century by the editors of *Tygodnik Literacki* (Literary weekly), which ran from 1838 to 1845 in Paris.⁸³

Grydzewski and Giedroyc, Part II: Polish Emigre Publishing after the Second World War

We can now pose a particular question regarding these two journals: are they “standard-bearers” (*niezłomni, nieprzejednani*) or “lost Romantics” (*zagubieni romantycy*)? These categories, which sound a bit tragicomic when translated into English, are taken from the titles of two studies on literary emigration: Habielski’s *Niezłomni, nieprzejednani: emigracyjne “Wiadomości” i ich krąg (1940–1981)*, a 1991 study of Grydzewski and the circle around his journal; and Waław Zbyszewski’s *Zagubieni romantycy i inni*, a 1992 collection of essays that Zbyszewski published over the years in *Wiadomości* and *Kultura* about émigré literary life. Zbyszewski, in this context, is a kind of participant-observer: during the period in question (1946–1960), he wrote for both Grydzewski and Giedroyc. The essay “Zagubieni Romantycy” (The lost Romantics) describes his relationship with both circles, but it eventually unfolds as a tribute to the group around *Kultura*. The title of the essay, a fairly common evocation of the nineteenth-century spiritual leaders of the Polish emigration, seems to implicate Giedroyc and his colleagues as the lost Romantics. The title of the entire collection, *Zagubieni romantycy i inni* (Lost Romantics and others), could refer to either the other essays, or the other émigrés discussed.

Habielski is from a later generation, but had been writing intellectual histories and editing the works of these groups of émigrés—particularly in London—for many years. His title, *Niezłomni, nieprzejednani*, translates more literally to “intransigents, unmovables,” and is a traditional way to describe the emigration after the Second World War, especially to London, of military leaders who did not want to have anything to do with

⁸³ The best source comparing the political and literary activities of the nineteenth-century Polish emigration to the current is no doubt Friszke, Machcewicz, and Habielski (1999).

the Communist government in Poland. Here, it also refers to various political lines drawn in the sand by Grydzewski, and to his legendary stubbornness in keeping to them. “Standard-bearers” is a metaphoric translation of Habielski’s title, and I use it very deliberately, embracing its archaic associations. One of the more attractive characteristics of the phrase is its transitive quality: one soldier may carry the flag into battle as the “standard-bearer,” but if he is wounded or killed and unable to continue, any other soldier may take the flag from him and become the standard-bearer. It is the flag that assigns the role to the carrier. The second meaning of the phrase denotes one who sets and holds up a certain level of achievement, and retains the transitive quality of the original meaning. Anyone can become “a bearer of the standard” in this broader sense, but there can still only be one bearer at a time, and furthermore, only one standard per system of meaning. Therefore, “standard-bearer” can describe Grydzewski’s resistance to modernism and avant-gardism in the interwar era, it can refer to his intransigency after the war, and it can imply that he is advancing the patriotic flag of the nineteenth-century Polish exile—making him a lost Romantic as well. Similarly, we can assign the badge of standard-bearer to Giedroyc before the war, either for defending the idea of Ukrainian self-rule or for attacking *Wiadomości Literackie* for encouraging graphomania. The eventual success of *Kultura* as a cohesive force behind Polish writing in emigration could pass the standard to Giedroyc as well. Without resolving the question, I would like to preserve these ambiguities while taking a closer look at the opposition that emerged between London and Paris after the war.

Given that Giedroyc’s first journals were given life by polemicizing against Grydzewski, the personal nature of some of those attacks, and the traditional rivalry between London and Paris onto which the two émigré communities were suddenly mapped, it is not surprising that antagonisms developed once more. An abridged version of events of the ensuing ten years is laid out in a timeline below:⁸⁴

⁸⁴ For a more elegant and nuanced description of the political life of *Kultura*, see Konstanty Jeleński’s introduction to Robert Kostrzewa’s *Between East and West: Writings from Kultura* (1990). Among the interesting details he relates are stories behind *Kultura*’s funding, its profound intergenerational dialogue, its enthusiasm for

1947: The first major issue to ignite tension between the two journals and their followers was a resolution passed in June of 1947 by Związek Pisarzy Polskich na Obczyźnie (The Association of Polish Writers Abroad, based in London and linked to *Wiadomości*), signed by forty writers, not to publish either old or new works in the press and publishing houses of Poland (Radzik 1991, 68). Many of the writers linked to *Kultura* did not agree with this resolution, and Herling-Grudziński in particular objected that this action would lead to a cultural ghetto in emigration.

1948: The publication of a section of Aleksander Janta-Połczyński's *Wracam z Polski* (I return from Poland), a subjective memoir that did not do much to criticize the new regime, in the April 1948 issue of *Kultura*, sparked the next divisive incident. Janta was one of the original investors in the journal as a member of Anders's Corps in Rome, and this connection led to the publication of his piece (Kowalczyk 1999, 102–103). This time, the London community objected vehemently, calling Giedroyc a traitor to the anticommunist cause.⁸⁵

1951: This was the background against which the “Miłosz affair” was staged, and what set off probably the most important rupture between Giedroyc and Grydzewski. When Miłosz decided to break with communism in January 1951, he began life in the West in Maisons-Laffitte, where *Kultura* was housed, and soon after published an essay in *Kultura*. It was during this period that he drafted *The Captive Mind* (1953), a seminal text on the forces that drive writers to turn to communism, as well as their subsequent disillusionment. His confessional self-criticism was received with mistrust and accusations in *Wiadomości*, including a personal attack by Grydzewski; because of Miłosz's former position as a diplomat, he was labeled a “collaborator” (Kowalczyk 1999, 179–80). In subsequent issues of both journals, the debate continued, and Miłosz was defended by Juliusz Mieroszewski, Giedroyc, and other *Kultura* writers.

Gomułka in 1956, and its “constant efforts to distinguish between Russia and the USSR” (18).

⁸⁵ Giedroyc did discontinue Janta's reports, a gesture towards appeasing the émigré community, but which according to Kowalczyk was also a pretext for freeing *Kultura* entirely from its obligation to these initial investors in Rome (104).

1952–1956: Beginning in 1952, Giedroyc initiated a reevaluation of “the Eastern question,” in which he argued for Ukrainian (as well as Belarusian and Lithuanian) self-determination. In some ways, this was a development of his views from the days of *Bunt Młodych* and *Polityka*, yet these statements took on a more heretical quality in emigration, given the number of émigrés staunchly holding on to Piłsudski’s dream of a greater Poland (Kowalczyk 1999, 149–51). In 1954, *Kultura* rejected the idea of “legalism,” or the recognition of a Polish state in emigration (Kowalczyk 1999, 105). During the thaw of October 1956, many prominent émigrés decided to return to Poland, and hopes were raised for cooperation with Gomułka’s new government. The staff of *Kultura* were initially among those supporting Gomułka. On October of that year, the Association of Polish Writers in London convened and issued a statement reasserting their proclamation of 1947, insisting on their embargo on Polish presses despite the changes in government. In response, *Kultura* conducted a survey of well-known writers and intellectuals living in emigration and published thirty-three answers of various lengths and opinions in the December 1956 issue. The majority opposed the proclamation. Not long after, *Kultura* reversed its position on the Gomułka government, but still refused to participate in London’s boycott of Polish publishing (Radzik 1991, 68–69).

Those events represent only a sample of the constant stream of editorials, feuilletons, and general polemic on both sides of the Channel, but it gives a sense of the political chess game that went on during these two decades. Before the war, Grydzewski was inclined to keep politics on the margins of literary life. There was no room for politics in the aesthetic purism of *Skamander* and in *Wiadomości Literackie*. Grydzewski rejected “isms” in favor of a spectrum of literary styles and tastes. Looking back on *Wiadomości Literackie* after the war, Giedroyc acknowledges the value of this inclusivity, and perhaps takes it to heart in his approach to editing *Kultura*: “Without a doubt it was a very important journal, a journal which played a big role, and at the same time, a journal which I contested with *Bunt Młodych* and *Polityka*. But *Wiadomości* was hugely popular, especially in the provinces where the progressive intelligentsia was chiefly interested in literature. It was supposed to be a platform of the radical Pol-

ish intelligentsia, which was understood very broadly. Grydzewski published everyone who had talent, regardless of political choice.”⁸⁶

Giedroyc, the prewar politician, had been the intransigent, unmovable one, while Grydzewski’s world had less fixed borders. When looking at a piece in *Kultura* like the December 1956 survey, one can see Giedroyc’s new “liberalism”—not necessarily in a political sense, but in the sense of inclusivity, of allowing a range of opinions to coexist in the journal, trusting the readers to navigate on their own.⁸⁷ Giedroyc was a politician first, one whose views were formed around Ukrainian cultural politics, and in a circle of Russian émigrés; because of this he seems ideally suited to navigate the complex interaction between culture and politics in postwar emigration. Grydzewski, on the other hand, tried to reconcile the intense postwar patriotism and frustration of the London émigré community (himself included) with his views about literature. With almost every study of *Wiadomości* comes the question: what happened to the celebrated editor of *Skamander* and *Wiadomości Literackie*? In his 1995 study, Mirosław Supruniuk describes the metamorphosis:

Wiadomości Literackie had ambitions to stimulate thought and intellectual opinions in its readers. It pandered to their tastes, but also appealed to their initiative, inspired, and provoked. Such was the opinion of Aleksander Wat, and Gombrowicz saw the weekly playing a role at the center of a “cultural revolution,” changing tastes and customs. *Wiadomości Polskie* and particularly *Wiadomości* attempted above all to soothe concerns and fulfill expectations. Grydzewski (at the end of the 1940s) gradually became dependent on the preferences of readers. He helped the

⁸⁶ “Bez wątpienia to było pismo bardzo ważne, pismo, które odgrywało dużą rolę, a równie ważne pismo, które zwalczałem w *Buncie Młodych* i *Polityce*. Ale popularność *Wiadomości* [*Literackich*], zwłaszcza na prowincji, gdzie literaturą zajmowała się głównie inteligencja postępową, była ogromna. Miała to być z założenia platforma radykalnej inteligencji polskiej tamtych lat, co w gruncie rzeczy rozumiano bardzo szeroko. Grydzewski drukował wszystkich, którzy mieli talent, bez względu na opcję polityczną” (Supruniuk 1994, 138).

⁸⁷ Both Kowalczyk and Supruniuk note the leftist influence that Czapski and the Hertzes had on Giedroyc’s politics and on the politics of *Kultura*. From this point of view, the resulting political stance of *Kultura* could be seen as more of a synthesis of their views than a single-handed shift on the part of Giedroyc.

emigration in developing its worldview, while at the same time being held hostage to their hopes and resentments.⁸⁸

According to Supruniuk's account, the journal served as a bridge to the past, a reassurance to the émigré community that Polish culture still existed in a tangible form. The fact that the journal grew out of the government-in-exile, and that it was so tightly bound to the Association of Polish Writers in London gave it an official status—the literary analog to the legalism that *Kultura* rejected. It also served an important role in publishing writers that *Kultura* would not publish, such as Jan Kott.

Another voice that highlighted this discontinuity is that of Gombrowicz, in a series of 1959 *Diary* entries. “How did this betrayal of Grydzewski by Grydzewski come about?” he asks, and compares the journal not even to the interwar *Wiadomości Literackie*, but to a conservative paper in interwar Warsaw:

One has to begin talking about this and not for the sake of petty annoyance: today *Wiadomości* is a chapel, a museum, mutual adoration society, catalog, album of withered souvenirs, cemetery, armorial, corner for philatelists or billiard players ... but most of all it is the resurrected and, as it turns out, immortal *Kurier Warszawski*. Unfortunately! ... This London weekly is the most recent edition of the same indestructible bourgeoisie from Krakowskie Przedmieście. And this really is a National Institution whole hog. . . . During the past dozen years of its life, *Wiadomości* has managed to alienate practically all the creative elements in emigration. (1989, 149)

⁸⁸ “*Wiadomości Literackie* miały ambicje stymulowania myślenia i postaw intelektualnych swoich czytelników. Schelbiały ich gustom, ale i przejawiały wobec nich inicjatywę, inspirowały i prowokały. Zwracał na to uwagę Aleksander Wat, a W. Gombrowicz przypisywał tygodnikowi rolę w środku “rewolucji kulturalnej” zmieniającej gusta i obyczaje. *Wiadomości Polskie*, a zwłaszcza *Wiadomości* starały się natomiast przede wszystkim zaspokajać zainteresowania i spełniać oczekiwania. Grydzewski (widać to już w końcu lat 40-tych) z wolna uzależniał się od preferencji czytelniczych. Dopomógł emigracji w wykształceniu jej światopoglądu stając się zarazem zakładnikiem nadziei i resentymentów wychodźstwa” (Supruniuk 1995, 18–19).



A few months later in *Diary*, in discussing Józef Wittlin's famous lecture "The Sorrow and the Grandeur of Exile," Gombrowicz singles out *Wiadomości* as emblematic of "Wittlin's characterization of the vast majority of émigré literature: 'mainly sentimental considerations, obsolete myths, and the obsolete laws of national aesthetics'" (168). The word "obsolete" here, qualifying myths and national aesthetics, refers to the myth of Romantic exile which even within Poland had dominated the "national aesthetic" since the 1830s. Gombrowicz's conclusion is that *Wiadomości* had been reduced to rehearsing the status quo of interwar Poland, and not even the progressive, active side of that era. This agrees with Grydzewski's earlier picture of Poland for the rest of Europe—*La Pologne Littéraire*, "dressed in the only way it knew how," only this time presenting itself to the emigration, which served as an excellent mirror, reflecting back the same values. Gombrowicz reflects this image back as well, with significant distortion, in *Trans-Atlantyk*. He adds, "fear grips me at the thought of what would have happened if *Kultura* had not appeared on the horizon by some happy miracle of dialectics, as an antithesis" (169).

It is easy to forget, reading Gombrowicz's words in the three-volume version of *Diary*, that they originally appeared in *Kultura*, that they are a part of the trail of émigré writings we are following, not just commentary on it. We are reminded, in his next entry, when Gombrowicz asks himself why he is making these provocative statements: "I am not doing this for the fun of it. It is a matter of creating a line of polarization, a line of demarcation" (169–70). This marks the preceding portrait as a performative statement, and we are immersed in the Gombrowiczian world where reflection combined with momentum becomes dialectical, and new forms appear. Is it true that *Kultura* developed as *Bunt Młodych* and *Polityka* did, in the negative space left by Grydzewski's publications? Is that dialectical relationship what is meant by "creating culture in emigration"? I would trace this suggestion back to its original setting, in interwar Poland, where the history of individual periodicals or literary circles does not seem to explain the intensity and quality of overall cultural production. We should look at the interaction of these different circles, where an editor ran two very different publications, where writers published in several places at once, and the ideological and/or aesthetic territory between these jour-

nals overlapped, was contested, created polemics, and caused some publications to fail and new ones to emerge.

It seems clear to me that the successes of *Kultura* and the failures of *Wiadomości* are deeply connected, yet even in the very detailed studies of *Kultura* and Giedroyc, *Wiadomości* and Grydzewski only appear incidentally, when a particular polemic is being discussed.⁸⁹ Janusz Korek's 1998 dissertation gives a thorough account of the evolution of political thought at *Kultura* from 1947 to 1980, particularly the series of events between 1947 and 1957 that I have schematized above, but very rarely mentions the London weekly. Kowalczyk's very personal and character-driven portrait of Giedroyc only alludes to Grydzewski in the context of direct exchanges between the editors, and confines its discussion of *Wiadomości* to a sidebar. And one of the best summaries of *Kultura*'s significance, Konstanty Jeleński's introduction to a volume of collected essays from the journal, does not mention *Wiadomości* once (Kostrzewa 1990). What happens in this last example is indicative: whenever *Wiadomości* does play a role in *Kultura*'s history, Jeleński refers to a conflict with "the great majority of Polish émigrés." This is, of course, true—the great majority of Polish émigrés agreed with, and in fact, determined Grydzewski's position—but it is useful to differentiate here between disagreeing with the emigration-at-large and disagreeing with a rival publication that broadcasts the opinions of the emigration-at-large.

Reading *Kultura* from a Distance

Yet what do we already know about the Polish emigration-at-large and how it interacted with these journals? Most times our impression of who is in the *krąg* (circle) of *Kultura* or *Wiadomości* is limited to the most well-known authors, whose texts are translated and reprinted elsewhere in the transatlantic traffic of ideas. The editors sometimes refer directly to their audience, or answer letters directly, but these are just sporadic glimpses of

⁸⁹ Of course, the opposite is not true: the most common reason given for the failure of *Wiadomości* to influence writers in emigration is, quite plainly, the success of *Kultura*.

the readership as a whole. Who was reading *Kultura* and why? How did the different political events and shifts in editorial policies affect that readership? These were the initial questions that motivated my large-scale database project on the readers and writers of *Kultura*.

The quantitative study I carried out on the geographical reach of *Kultura* across several dimensions of the Polish diaspora, a methodological experiment borrowed from the digital humanities, is meant to illustrate a side of the political-cultural journal which cannot be seen from either the synchronic or the diachronic portraits presented above. Working with a small research team, I extracted information about when and where people contributed to *Kultura*. This includes the authors published in the journal, along with basic metadata on the volume, year, and issue number. We then estimated where the authors were located when they wrote the piece in question.⁹⁰ We also recorded the date and location of the letter writers to *Kultura*; the date, location, and amount of donations sent in by supporters of the journal; and, when available, the date and location of the contributions that *Kultura* rejected. We then generated maps with the help of GIS specialists to illustrate the larger reach and impact of this journal.⁹¹

While mapping *Kultura* might at first glance look like a straightforward application of communication or social network theory to literary history, it is rather an intervention in the sphere of literary criticism itself. The study of cultural expressions such as journals with heterogeneous materials has been bound either by ideological frameworks (politicized or biographical readings) or strictly material literary histories (content analysis or anecdotes of production). Meanwhile, literary criticism practiced

⁹⁰ This was a research task carried out over several years, and with input from many different research assistants and secondary sources. It was often difficult to determine exactly where a given author was in the postwar years, due to spontaneous travel and emigration, unreliable information provided by contemporary encyclopedias of emigration, and the common use of pseudonyms in the journal. The most intensive work was done by Rebecca Dulemba, Patrycja Pawłowska, Ewa Zegler-Poleska, and myself; our database of *Kultura* metadata will be available online in an open-access format, and we will encourage modifications from the scholarly community in order to continue improving the accuracy of the dataset.

⁹¹ In particular, Adam Pruss and Taylor Beale provided the knowledge and expertise to carry out this task.

during the fifty years when *Kultura* was published has been very closely tied to close readings of individual texts. Even the more socially or materially grounded analyses of the “cultural turn”—postcolonial theory, gender studies, and ethnic studies—still rely on close reading as a fundamental mode of inquiry. More recently, literary scholars of broader phenomena, such as Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova, have turned to metrics which they have sometimes labeled “distant reading,” an attempt to illuminate new aspects of literary form and culture by looking through a macro lens, including large-scale changes over space and time.⁹² These loosely grouped practices of distant reading can be carried out through quantitative analysis, as Moretti does, or via qualitative models borrowed from the social sciences, but then reconfigured with literary or cultural variables, as Casanova does. The fundamental idea is that if we change our scope, patterns begin to emerge that challenge assumptions behind our gaze.

The authors of Kultura

The first set of maps show where the authors of *Kultura* were located at the time their texts were published in the journal. There were regular reports from cities important to the diaspora: London, Brussels, and Berlin. There are pockets of émigrés in some places further afield, like Buenos Aires, New York, and Toronto. Map One shows authors writing in the journal from 1947 to 1989. Map Two provides a closer view of the continent of Europe for these same figures. Immediately evident from this quick reduction in scale is the fact that the majority of authors contributing to the journal during the Cold War were living in either Europe or North America. After looking more closely at the map of Europe, we notice that the continent is not starkly divided between East and West: this is the first striking view of the movement of texts across the Iron Curtain. In the following series of maps, three through five, these same authors contributing to *Kultura* are represented over different periods of time on

⁹² See, for example, Moretti (2007), Casanova (2004), and Hayles (2013).

the European continent. There are several compelling narratives to be drawn from these maps, some of which reflect the dialogue between *Kultura* and its homeland discussed in the previous section. During the journal's first period, there are almost no contributors located in Poland, but after Giedroyc's new "liberalism" of the 1950s, more begin to appear. As *samizdat-tamizdat* traffic picked up in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the number of contributors from Poland grows significantly, and the next map (1974–1981) includes the period of Solidarity and open publishing from Poland. The last map (1982–1989) is again counterintuitive: martial law did not stop the flow of texts from Poland to the West, but in fact the number of authors from Poland publishing in *Kultura* increases as *samizdat* and "second circulation" publishing reaches its peak in the mid-1980s.

Different stories can be read from these maps about the role of various European cities as points of transfer and resettlement for emigrants: apart from London and Paris, there is a great deal of variation in the number of contributing authors from cities like Stockholm, Naples, Munich, and Frankfurt. I will single out Munich here, as it was the seat of Radio Free Europe, and therefore its role as home to *Kultura* authors is directly related to the wave of émigrés who left Poland in the wake of 1956. There is a three-fold increase in the number of contributions from Munich between the first and second periods; the number steadily decreased over the remainder of the Cold War, as those who emigrated from Poland to Munich disseminated to points farther west. Maps Six and Seven show the same authors in cartograms by country,⁹³ first in the period 1947–1949, and then for contrast 1960–1964. One of the most evident patterns that run through both sets of maps is the high number of authors coming from the United Kingdom, and the increase in authors from the United States, Canada, and Poland (a trend which continues after 1968). This resonates with what we know about the dynamic between Giedroyc and Grydzewski, as well as the changing patterns of where different waves of Polish émigrés settled (Dopierała 2003).

⁹³ A cartogram illustrates the relative weight of each country's contribution by distorting the size of the country to represent its relative proportion of the total contributions.

The letter writers of Kultura

If the different constituencies of the journal can be represented as concentric circles of engagement, the next widest one would be those who wrote letters into the journals. Sometimes the letter writers were authors themselves, commenting on another piece, or responding to a letter. Most typically, however, they illustrate which of the regular readers of *Kultura* felt that their voice belonged in the journal alongside of the authors. Maps Eight, Nine, and Ten show where the letter writers can be found, first in cities, then by country proportionally. The maps of letter writers by city reveal a broadening of the imprint of *Kultura*: whereas the authors become more concentrated in certain capital (and academic capital) cities, the letter writers are moving in an opposite direction, so that we see more dots farther away from the cities, farther across the United States and Australia, and more diversely spread out in Europe. With just a glance through these different periods, it is clear that the number of letters did not change over time. Instead, the maps show the circles of readership broadening, as well as the engagement of more remote émigrés. These maps also show the increasing importance of Scandinavia in the years after 1968, as that was one of the common paths of people leaving the country.

The funders of Kultura

The last and most compelling diaspora Poles who left their tracks on *Kultura* are the “funders.” These are people who sent in small *wpłaty* (transfers), initially to support the journal, but later in response to world events. More so than the authors and letter writers, reading the funding from a distance gives us a new picture of how deeply *Kultura* reached into diaspora pockets. Rather than functioning as a salon journal only for the elite (as many have accused it of being, both from Communist Poland and from the more nationalist corners of the Polish and Russian diaspora), maps Eleven through Fourteen show an active use of the journal as a me-

dium of communication and connection with the homeland.⁹⁴ If we look at the general trends starting in 1955 (there were no contributions sent in until Giedroyc made his famous appeal for funds in the mid-1950s), we can see noticeable patterns of response to different politically sensitive moments. Seeing the funders of the journal represented this way shows the third concentric ring of participation: those who do not feel that their voices belong in the journal, but still wanted to play a role in sustaining it. Of course, some authors and letter writers did send contributions in as well, but the maps make very clear that more individuals are participating as funders, and they are in different places. The funders are located deeper in the diaspora, in small ethnic pockets spread all the way across the North American continent, Western Europe, and Australia, and in strategic locations in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East.

From the cartograms, it might look like there were more funders from the United States and Australia, able to donate larger sums of money. This is slightly misleading, for in fact the large amounts of money represented at certain points (for example, Australia in 1970) are the result of one very wealthy donor, sending extremely large sums on three consecutive occasions. So while the number of funders does steadily increase in response to particular political events, the vast majority of them are giving small amounts of money. I find this type of contribution more significant, in fact, than a wealthy donor giving a large amount of money. Some of the most touching “notes” specify exactly what the funds are to be used for. In the beginning, they were almost entirely for the *Kultura* foundation—that is, to sustain the journal. There are occasionally suggestions that the funders are sending donations to honor loved ones, *zamiast kwiatów* (instead of flowers), or suggest personal greetings. But over the course of the 1970s, the notes start to acquire more political valence until there are funds earmarked for KOR (The Committee to Defend Workers, an early version

⁹⁴ When viewing these two sets of maps, there are a few very important variables to keep in mind: a) the initial city-based maps are measuring number of contributions, while the second, country-based cartograms are measuring total contributions of each country in francs; b) these amounts in francs are adjusted for inflation in France, but do not take into account fluctuations in the exchange rate between countries, therefore some countries’ contributions might seem higher than others because of weaker and stronger currencies.

of Solidarity), Solidarity, the independent press in Poland, “straight to the hands of Lech Wałęsa,” and so forth.

The numbers of authors and letter writers from Poland grew over time, in synchronicity with Giedroyc’s policies of keeping the door to the homeland open, while there were very few financial contributions from Poland itself. Yet for those in the deep diaspora, *Kultura* was entirely about that open door. They could get news of Poland and frozen memories of Polish culture from *Wiadomości*, but by sending a donation to *Kultura*, they could actually come into virtual contact with Poland. The flowers and greetings that émigrés sent might be intended for fellow émigrés, but most oftentimes were for people back home. And over the course of the 1970s (1968 through martial law in 1982), donations soared in number, amount, and specificity, until there were hundreds in each issue.

Towards an Extraterritorial Literature

Although Aladár Kuncz’s conclusion in *Erdélyi Helikon* that minority art is stronger than majority art is much too broad to be mapped onto the Polish situation, his observations about the situation of emigration are interesting, and in my view, applicable to other contexts. In one sense, both *Kultura* and *Wiadomości* could be read as minority groups, free from the Polish postwar mandate to build and fortify a national literature. But was this really the case: could Poles in emigration leave the nation-building literature to socialist realists in Warsaw? Because of the political constraints on aesthetic development in Poland, this function was left to the emigration as well.

Instead of locating the major/minor dichotomy inside and outside the Polish border, I would place it between London—where the government-in-exile was eventually seated and many institutions of legalism remained—and Paris. From this perspective, Paris becomes Kolozsvár, and the writers around *Kultura* are able to be more dynamic and open to different trends because the national flag has already been raised by *Wiadomości*, and Grydzewski and his staff have circled the wagon. Giedroyc assumes the voice of the minority, which in this case turns out

to be stronger. If this is the basis of the “happy miracle of dialectics” celebrated by Gombrowicz, it explains the role that *Wiadomości* and Grydzewski played in the success of *Kultura*. Giedroyc could not have taken the range of political positions that he did in respect to the People’s Republic of Poland, or defied the bourgeois literary taste of the Polish emigration without the knowledge that Grydzewski would bear the standard and let him play the lost Romantic. When it comes to creating culture in emigration, we could conclude from here, one cannot do it alone.

Reading *Kultura* from a distance demonstrates exactly this: that the small crew in Maisons-Laffitte was not at all alone. The strongest corrective that this project offers to the wider understanding of the relationship between *Kultura* and its audience is that it defies the stereotype that *Kultura* was only a journal for intellectuals and political elites (seemingly evident when only looking at the authors who published it). The great majority of the diaspora is usually assumed to have more conservative, reactionary, and nationalist affinities, which is why small diaspora groups almost always publish a newsletter with that character. And although we could tell from the subscription records that small diaspora groups would order the journal, it was not at all clear until now what they did with those journals full of political ambiguity and compromises with individual writers from behind the Iron Curtain. After looking carefully at the intersecting rings of activity emanating from this journal, it seems that diaspora groups really did accept this journal as a part of their émigré lifestyle, and used it as a platform for the expression of their hopes and desires for the future—both in emigration and at home.

Transmedial Work-Arounds after 1989

Moving Beyond Text and Context

I have imagined various models for how texts circulate across borders (*samizdat-tamizdat*). In this fourth and last chapter, I want to explore the problematic of “transmediality”—that is, how texts change meaning when crossing borders across forms.⁹⁵ The move from one art form to another was at first perhaps a by-product of the geographical repositioning we saw in the Central European movement. In the East, texts produced or reproduced in the West were suspected of political provocation; in the West, texts from the East or broadcast to the East were enlisted into a different war of words—the liberal campaign to enlighten, democratize, and support civil society. Both are distortions that can be productive and unproductive. So the concept of work-around becomes useful to circumvent political associations with terms such as “censorship,” “press freedom,” “*samizdat*,” and “state-sponsored media,” while retaining a positive valence—“how one actor is able to adjust a technology to meet his or her particular needs or goals.”⁹⁶ It resonates with the lexicon of the Internet

⁹⁵ This term is borrowed from Hillary Chute and Patrick Jagoda’s insightful work on the comic form and its migration between media. See their introduction to the Spring 2014 special issue of *Critical Inquiry* on “Comics and Media”: “the term describes a relationship between media that is proliferating and relational rather than additive. It is a way of opening up an analysis by attending to intersections and differences instead of investing in sharp demarcations among discrete media at the outset” (2).

⁹⁶ See Pollock (2005), which analyzes how “users are not simply shaped by technologies but how they are also shapers of technology” (497).

age, but has just as much applicability to past practices seeking practical solutions to seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

In what follows, I will examine several moments in the postsocialist period where the binaries of East/West, North/South, insider/outsider, oppositionist/émigré and the movement of texts again seem to dictate cultural dynamics even as the geopolitical frame changed. In the region as a whole, the rhetoric of postcolonial grievance was given over largely to an unreflective “return” to Europe, although there were repeated gestures of defiance (and then submission) to pan-European and even global norms of commerce and governance. The examples I examine in this chapter, however, suggest that under civic duress, the system of *samizdat-tamizdat* as practiced during the Cold War reemerged with all its virtuality, transmediality, distortion, and cultural productivity. And although the media have changed, the essay as form, and the political-cultural journal as vehicle, still echo in contemporary border-crossing texts.

First I would like to tackle an example that challenges the facile political equation between those challenging authoritarian rule, and a liberal, democratic platform. We know from broader studies of *samizdat* that much of the writing produced underground and in emigration was reactionary, nationalist, and even right-wing extremist (Johnston 1999). Only the most (Western) triumphalist narratives of the *samizdat-tamizdat* system allow us to believe in the political uniformity of the underground. A short sketch of “dissidence” in Yugoslavia not only illustrates the pluralism of anticommunist opposition, but shows how some activists working within that opposition used the liberal platform to camouflage nationalist campaigns.⁹⁷ Using the *tamizdat* publication *CADDY Bulletin* as a starting point, I track the evolution of these figures from “nationalists” to “dissidents” in the late Cold War period, and the implications for postsocialist Yugoslavia.

The other three examples I would like to situate within the frame of the cultural work-around are more familiar in Slavic studies: Milošević’s Serbia, Kuchma’s Ukraine, and Lukashenko’s Belarus. Elaborating on the practices and techniques of cultural work-arounds in these environ-

⁹⁷ This should by no means be taken as a claim against the entirety of the Yugoslav opposition to communism, but only as a profile of a few extreme, though well-known cases.

ments, I place them in continuity with the *samizdat-tamizdat* system, both practically and politically, while remaining sensitive to the geopolitical changes and new media practices of the postsocialist and post-Soviet era.

Abuses of the Helsinki Accords in Yugoslavia (1989)

In this section I would like to return to one of the claims made in Chapter Two, that the idea of Central Europe fell apart in the early 1990s not only because of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of state socialism, but also because of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Writers like Danilo Kiš and Péter Esterházy, scholars like Roman Szporluk and Tomas Venclova, and of course the figureheads of this literary movement, Czesław Miłosz and Milan Kundera, often pointed to the Yugoslav identity as synecdoche for Central Europe. So when the Yugoslav Republic disintegrated in the early 1990s, it was of particular concern to those committed to the idea of Central Europe (cf. the last two issues of *Cross Currents*). For self-designated Central Europeans, Yugoslavia's dissolution was more than a site of horror at the atrocities committed, and a failed cultural experiment in ethnic and religious coexistence; it was also a case of *trahison des clercs*.⁹⁸ What horrified Miłosz, Konrád, Barańczak, and Škvorecký was the role in the fueling of nationalist tensions that writers, scholars, intellectuals, and the intelligentsia at large had played, as well as the widely disseminated views of journalists like Timothy Garton Ash. Todorova claims that these voices were responsible for the North–South split that emerged post-1989 between the Visegrád countries and the Balkans, where the latter were isolated from international support and therefore more susceptible to separatist and nationalist movements.

The betrayal of the clerks, then, is a story about how people known to the international community as “dissident” intellectuals and public figures became ex-Yugoslavia's leading nationalists in the late 1980s, with Franjo

⁹⁸ Benda's phrase, “the betrayal of the clerks,” discussed at greater length in Chapter Two.

Tudjman and Dobrica Ćosić as perhaps the most notorious examples.⁹⁹ Here we have an important intersection between two concurrent discourses: that of the poet or writer turned public intellectual (truly a late nineteenth-century–early twentieth-century paradigm, as discussed by Julian Benda), and that of the international human rights community which emerged in the late 1970s after the Helsinki Accords. These two modes of thinking merged in the Central European movement, which was simultaneously apolitical—or perhaps antipolitical—in its aesthetic goals and highly politicized in how it contested geography. And in this intersection, the human rights community ended up disenchanted with its former socialist dissident heroes.

The primary sources that alerted me to this struggle were the publications of CADDY, the Committee to Aid Democratic Dissent in Yugoslavia (see Figs. 14 and 15). The group's monthly *Bulletin* was modeled on the Russian *Chronicle of Current Events* and the Polish *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, and was composed of white papers and open letters. Often, it simply listed "writers and artists" persecuted and imprisoned in Yugoslavia. Its tone was indignant, and read like a cross between the underground publications mentioned above, *Index on Censorship*, and an inward-looking émigré publication. The *Bulletin* was published from 1980 until 1992, essentially contemporaneous with the reinvention of Central Europe. In this context, its masthead was notable. At its inception in 1980, the *Bulletin* was coedited by Milovan Djilas, Mihajlo Mihajlov, and Franjo Tudjman—the most renown Marxist revisionist of the 1960s, the most notorious Yugoslav dissident in exile of the 1970s and 1980s, and the first president of independent Croatia after 1989, respectively. After Djilas's death, Momčilo Selić, a representative of the next generation of Yugoslav opposition, took over as coeditor. This made the *Bulletin*'s authors both subjects and objects of the question of "dissidence" in Yugoslavia. The *CADDY Bulletin* was both the production and the codification of their movement, a self-study in dissent.

⁹⁹ I would list several others, more recognized in Yugoslavia than abroad: Vojislav Šešelj, Janez Janša, and one might even add Alija Izetbegović, although he was never accused by the international media of the same strain of nationalism as the others in this group.

The Democracy International COMMITTEE TO AID DEMOCRATIC DISSIDENTS IN YUGOSLAVIA

RECEIVED 6 JAN 1988

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Report
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RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION FOR ESTABLISHING POLITICAL DEMOCRACY IN THE S.F.R. OF YUGOSLAVIA

MS CATHERINE A. FITZPATRICK
Executive Secretary
JOHN T. WAINWRIGHT
Legal Counsel

New York: December 31, 1987. - With the worsening socio-economic-political crisis in the country the CDFTE has again issued a proposal for democratic reforms as the only possible way to recovery.

Reforms initiated by the authorities had no impact other than to exacerbate ethnic animosities and social unrest. Yugoslavia is teetering on the brink of disaster, partially because no fundamental changes have been sought by those who have sustained the present regime for so long. It is time to change this unproductive policy.

The CDFTE proposal is sent to the State Department in order that it re-examines the unconditional aid policy and that it may by supporting democratic forces in the country, secure the tranquility in that land - a professed U.S. policy goal. To the U.S. legislators that they may influence the government's policy, and to a number of editors in the hope that they will publicize the struggle of democratic forces in Yugoslavia.

C.A.D.D.Y.

Background and Translation provided by the Committee to Aid Democratic Dissidents in Yugoslavia.

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*Axiations listed for identification purposes only

Figure 14. First page of "Recommendation by the Committee for the Freedom of Thought and Expression for Establishing Political Democracy in Yugoslavia," Committee to Aid Democratic Dissidents in Yugoslavia (December 31, 1987). (Courtesy of the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives.)

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Throughout the 1980s, there were two sets of terms deployed simultaneously about people like Tudjman or Ćosić: the international community called them dissidents, while the Communist Party authorities in Yugoslavia called them nationalists, because since the Croatian Spring of 1971, *any* oppositional movement in Yugoslavia was understood in terms of nationalism. While many of them were, in fact, nationalists, this is not the point. The most antinationalist, liberal humanist, democracy-building dissidents were also labeled as nationalists. According to Yugoslav authorities and press, anyone who was not actively supporting the regime was automatically a nationalist—from political prisoners on hunger strike to soccer hooligans burning cars. After Tito's death in 1983, the regime became even more paranoid, and probably rightly so: nationalist politicians were reaching larger and larger audiences with their claims, and increasingly operating beyond state control. So my question about this material had to be flipped: how did the nationalists come to be labeled as dissidents?

By the time CADDY began publishing its bulletin in 1980, the West had already formulated “dissidents” as such. To find the origins of the designation, we must look in the late 1960s, to records held at the Open Society Archives in Budapest, of the Helsinki Foundation, *Index on Censorship*, OMRI (Open Media Research Institute), Amnesty International, and of course, Radio Free Europe. From these sources, it is possible to reconstruct when and how the international community formed its concept of “dissent” in Yugoslavia, and how these terms were countered by Yugoslav authorities. This is more than just a lexical query. At the heart of this question is the moment that the concept of freedom of expression became fused with a political persona, and one onto which the West projected values associated with liberal democratic thinking. At times, this was a bad fit. And since my project is concerned with a variety of mediated strategies that contest national or imperial geographies in favor of regional ones, typically from outside of the nation itself, looking at this moment in the former Yugoslavia demonstrates how the same configuration of cross-border communication and movement of texts can work in the opposite direction, to reify the national and channel diasporic exceptionalism in the service of “dissent” from authority.

In the 1950s and 1960s, dissent was embodied in an individual, a lone figure who spoke out openly against the regime and was punished, censored, and eventually exiled. The models were Voltaire, Zola, and people like Miłosz, who came in from the cold. In Yugoslavia, we have the examples of the freethinking leftism of Milovan Djilas, and then the more strident anti-Titoism of Mihajlo Mihajlov. They were the individuals active in the Yugoslav opposition movements who were visible to the West. One visible mass movement was the so-called Croatian Spring, in late 1970–early 1971, when thousands of academics and professionals in related fields were removed from their position in the regime’s crackdown on emergent Croatian nationalism.¹⁰⁰ However, this was not understood (either by the regime or its observers in the East and the West) as a “NE” to Tito, but rather as a secessionist irruption, that then underwent authoritarian repression.

With the Helsinki Accords of 1975, however, dissent was redefined as a matter of practice. It was conceived and measured in actions by the opposition and in subsequent reactions by the government. This meant publishing underground literature, organizing flying universities, giving controversial speeches at writers’ unions, and suffering the consequences of those acts. The first major attempt to categorize Yugoslav opposition as “dissident” was a 1977 article by Rusko Matulić, “The Repression of Dissent in Yugoslavia.” This historical overview begins with Goli Otok and the purges that accompanied the consolidation of the Tito regime in the 1950s and early 1960s, and then identifies two distinct and separate acts of “dissent”: one by Mihajlov, the other a Marxist one by the Praxis group.¹⁰¹ Writing about the Croatian Spring, he gives us an interesting meta-commentary about the reaction in the West: “It is ironic to note that although

¹⁰⁰ Extensive primary sources on this movement and its repression can be found in the RFE/RL subject files at the Open Society Archives (HU OSA 300-10-2; boxes 279–281). For a strong, scholarly analysis of the link between the Croatian Spring and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, see Irvine 2008.

¹⁰¹ Formed in 1965, then removed in 1976 (*Škola filozofii* in Belgrade). Originally, the group consisted of Milan Kangrga, Danilo Pejović, Zagorka Pešić-Golubović, Milan Životić, and Danko Grlić, then in 1975: Svetozar Stojanović, Mihajlo Marković, Ljubo Tadić, Zagorka Pešić-Golubović, Milan Životić, Dragoljub Mičunović, Trivo Indić, and Nebojša Popov.

these dissenters were only dismissed from their teaching positions—but were given other employment and passports to travel—their plight created more protests abroad than the persecution of any other group or any individual, with the possible exception of Djilas” (21). The final gesture of this article is to provide a “concise dossier” of individuals arrested and materials banned from 1956 to 1976. Matulić qualifies them this way: “Noted are arrests from 1956 of better-known individual groups holding widely divergent views, but with a generally common position of opposition to the existing system . . .; noted also is a sampling of the ban on publications, and plays and films” (22). What is important here is his characterization of “widely divergent views, but with a generally common position,” which can easily be seen in the materials banned as well. Up to this moment, there had been only one point of view, from which this group had been viewed homogeneously—by the Titoist regime, which labeled them all nationalists. Then, there was a gesture from the West (importantly, by a Yugoslav émigré), that labeled them all as dissidents.

Several of the “heroes” of this narrative are included in this document: Franjo Tuđman, Dobrica Ćosić, and Sveta Stojanović. Two others, Alija Izetbegović and Janez Janša, appear in related materials. The case of Ćosić will serve to illustrate how the creation of a dissident worked at this stage. By the early 1970s, Ćosić was well known as a successful novelist, both politically and socially; he was best known for his novel *Daleko je sunce* (Far Away Is the Sun), about the partisan struggles of the Second World War. He began to take more and more positions as a public intellectual, and was associated with the politically radical Praxis group; he made a particularly inflammatory speech at the Serbian Writers’ Union in 1971, which was reprinted in *tamizdat* (émigré) press and circulated underground.¹⁰² When

¹⁰² An ensuing article in *Filosofia* 16 (July 17, 1972), “Procesi, presude, i naivna pitanja” (Trials, sentences, and naïve questions) was banned and reprinted in the Canadian *tamizdat* journal *Glas kanadskih Srba*, 2093–2094 (1973). His book *Moć i strepnje* (Power and anxiety) was published in January of 1972, as well as a follow-up piece, “Kultura i revolucija” (Culture and revolution), *Praxis* 3–5 (1974). From a 1983 RFE/RL Background Report by Zdenko Antić: “Ćosić’s concern for the fate of the Serbian people was once again expressed in a speech he made on the occasion of his election as a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1977. Ćosić’s address was not published until recently in Yugoslavia, but has been circulating in Belgrade and in Serbia in *samizdat* form; one quotation from it—‘what kind of people are we that so

he came under attack by the authorities, there were several articles in the Western press, particularly in France and the United States, though they did not call him a dissident.¹⁰³

It was Mihajlov's trip abroad in 1978, and his decision to stay in the West, that consolidated the claims of *dissidence* in Yugoslavia. Mihajlov toured on a lecture circuit of the developing organs of Cold War cultural diplomacy: the PEN club, area studies centers, the League for Industrial Democracy, and others. He wrote an article for the *Washington Quarterly* very similar to that of Matulić, taxonomizing dissidence into different groups, and arguing for its recognition: "A week ago the first *samizdat* journal appeared in Belgrade. US newspapers ignored it, as they have ignored the campaign of vilification which Yugoslav newspapers have for months been waging against Djilas, myself, and other dissidents. Nevertheless, things have been changing somewhat. Recently, the Committee to Aid Democratic Dissent in Yugoslavia was formed in the United States" (Mihajlov 1979, 69). His *samizdat* reference is to *Časovnik*, a joint effort by Mihajlov and Momčilo Selić, which did not last long. The following year, just five months after Tito's death, Ćosić and Ljubomir Tadić started an above-ground journal, *Javnost*, labeled by RFE and the Western press as "Yugoslavia's first 'free and democratic' magazine" (Stanković 1980). That very same year, CADDY started publishing its bulletin in the United States.

The content of the *Časovnik* and *Javnost* publications was strikingly different, but in terms of constructing the notion of dissent, as long as these journals were in opposition to the regime, they could be placed in the same genre. This same logic was applied to Izetbegović's publications of the early 1980s, such as *Islam between East and West*, and later that decade, to articles published in *Mladina*, a Slovenian youth journal which functioned as a forum for relatively free expression within Slovenia, and as *tamizdat* for the rest of Yugoslavia.

many of us laid down our lives for freedom during the war, and then victory deprived us of freedom?'—is frequently quoted by Serbs" (1983a, 5). The address was published in *tamizdat* form in *Naša Reč* (London), nos. 288, 289, 290 (October, November, December 1977), and then at a publishing house in Rijeka, where 10,000 copies sold out in a few days.

¹⁰³ Meanwhile, in the mid to late 1970s, contemporaneous with the Red Army Faction, there were several terrorist attacks carried out by radical Croatian groups in emigration.

Rehearsing the relationship between content and form brings out the following tautology:

Why is this person a dissident?

This person is a dissident because he/she is persecuted by the Yugoslav Communist authorities, because he/she publishes in underground journals, and sometimes even abroad.

Why is this person persecuted by the Yugoslav Communist authorities?

Because he/she is a nationalist and because he/she publishes in underground journals, and sometimes even abroad.¹⁰⁴

The bulletin that brought me to this subject, published by CADDY, is an important piece of this system: by the mid-1980s, political prisoners in Yugoslavia had fully entered the international stage of human rights. Amnesty International and the Helsinki Foundation sent program officers to visit them in prison, interview their families, and help set up funds to help those persecuted, on the model of KOR in Poland. While the *CADDY Bulletin* looks like a relatively independent publication initiated by dissidents underground and in emigration, I recognized its provenance while examining the human rights files. The executive secretary of the CADDY organization, Cathy Fitzpatrick, was the Program Officer for Yugoslavia at the Helsinki Foundation. Its address was the same as the Helsinki Foundation, and it marked parallel organizations. I found individual issues of the bulletin scattered throughout the research files I examined, some of its contents literally cut and pasted into the RFE reports, as well as in the *Index on Censorship*. This was one important node through which activities on the ground—hunger strikes, open letters, and petitions—were disseminated into an international context.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ For example, there is a RFE/RL Background Report on “Ćosić’s Book: A Case Study of Yugoslavia’s Censorship” (Antić 1983b), and then there are TANJUG reports about how Ćosić is stirring up nationalism and discord.

¹⁰⁵ It is also important to reiterate that these categories of “dissent” and later “nationalist,” too, are not simply top-down designations, labels applied by people working at a distance. These are self-referential terms, just as actively constructed and used for political ends by the actors on the ground.

The last chapter in the story from nationalist to dissident to nationalist comes in the long 1980s. In this period, the human rights community was focused on several major events: Tudjman's trial in 1981; the trial of the "Belgrade Six" in February 1985 (after which Selić publishes a call in *Index* to "all dissident brothers" to support them); the 1987 trial of the "Sarajevo Thirteen," a group around Izetbegović and a new Bosnian Islamic identity; student protests growing in strength in Slovenia culminating in Janez Janša's arrest in 1989; and the ever-increasing number of arrests, anonymous attacks, and other persecution of Albanian intellectuals in Kosovo throughout the decade. International pressure, combined with a vacuum in centralized power in the post-Tito era, led to increasing crackdowns, followed by sudden amnesties for notorious figures. In 1986, one of the Belgrade Six, Vojislav Šešelj, was released from prison, and soon after so was his lawyer Vladimir Šeks. Human rights reports of the time detail the connections between Šešelj, Ćosić, the flying university in Belgrade, the Belgrade Six, Djilas, and Stojanović. He was the subject of a special report in the *CADDY Bulletin*, in November 1986, "The Post-Prison Persecution of Vojislav Šešelj" (see Fig. 15). The following year, the Helsinki Foundation established a Yugoslav chapter, whose members were made up of those that had been imprisoned, persecuted, and/or responsible for supporting those dissidents.

La trahison des clercs

At this point, the documentation reveals that the language used by the human rights community turned to the nationalist cause. In October 1988, thirty Serb writers withdrew from the Writers' Union in Kosovo because they saw Albanian-Kosovar writers "remaining silent while Albanian nationalists and separatists in Kosovo are allowed to 'carry out genocide on the Slav population by using the most inhumane and cowardly means'" ("Resignations from Kosovo Writers' Society" 1988). The following year, not long after Milošević's famous speech at Kosovo Polje, several subcommittees of the Yugoslav Helsinki chapter formed, including one called the Yugoslav Forum for Human Rights in Kosovo, which was the "first estab-

lished Yugoslav forum for human rights and the right to security from the threats to human rights in Kosovo.”¹⁰⁶ The principal force behind this subcommittee seems to have been Svetozar “Sveta” Stojanović, who would become a “dissident” again in his opposition to Milošević in 1999–2000. The writers were concerned about the human rights, or civil rights, of Serbian citizens in Kosovo, and they detailed acts of aggression and institutionalized ethnic hatred which threatened them. In other words, a nationalist—one might even say irredentist—claim was made with the language and cultural capital of human rights.

As these nationalist positions came into focus in the late 1980s, the RFE reports, Helsinki research, and the human rights community in general remained silent about the actions of former so-called dissidents. Instead, these organs focused more and more of their energies on the issue of the persecution of Muslim minorities in Kosovo. When one of the former dissidents-turned-nationalists comes up in the human rights literature, he is usually referred to as “controversial” (Markotić 1994).

Who were the people, then, who were operating somewhere on the spectrum between dissidence and nationalism? Šešelj, who was tried (and recently acquitted) by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague for war crimes; Ćosić, the first president of Serbia after 1989, who became closely aligned with Milošević’s policies and indirectly with the military aggression in the Republika Srpska; Tudjman, who led his country to war from the outbreak of violence in 1992 until the Dayton Accords in 1996. Izetbegović held a different position in the eyes of the international community through the 1990s, as the leader of a semi-failed state, and a defensive protector of Bosniak interests in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Others, like Janša, were simply found lacking in moral stamina and convicted of bribery and corruption, a syndrome not specific to former Yugoslav dissidents. Of course, not everyone who was characterized as a dissident became a nationalist, and some nationalists who leaned to intellectuals in their youth (for example, Radovan Karadžić) were never labeled as dissidents by the international community.

¹⁰⁶ “Prvi stavovi jugoslovenskog foruma za ljudska prava i pravnu sigurnost građana povodom ugrožavanja ljudskim prava na Kosovo.”

However, the tautology above—that “dissidents” were people considered nationalists by this regime—led to two important conclusions about the operative power of these terms in a broader sense. The first is that the considerable delay we saw in the early 1990s in ascribing nationalist behavior to these former dissidents must be a hangover from the pre-1989 era, when that very term had been deprived of all real meaning by decades of Communist abuse of it. Beyond the level of discourse, the sheer investment of the human rights organs in individuals like Šešelj, Tadjman, and (farther back) Ćosić must have led to a real hesitation in condemning their actions. The second observation concerns the treason of the intellectuals. In the 1990s, many of the Central Europeans who brought me to reexamine this issue lost faith not just in particular individual actors, but in the entire system of human rights protection. The defeat of the idea of Yugoslavia also meant in some cases the abuse of the language of human rights. Transatlantic Central Europe was quite carefully protected from direct political engagement, but its proponents were a part of the community of open-letter writers, petition signers, and transnational political engagement. The late 1980s and early 1990s in Yugoslavia represented a bankruptcy of the entire liberal humanist enterprise which had fueled their critique.

The Case of Radio B92/B2-92: From Analog to Digital Practices (1990s)

Then there was a strange coincidence. On the same day that the regime banned the radio station, a technician arrived to install a dedicated phone line—which we had requested months earlier—enabling us to communicate with our Internet service provider in Amsterdam. The same Telecommunications Ministry that banned the radio station thus provided us with the means to evade the ban via the Internet.

—Veran Matić and Dražen Pantić,
“War of Words” (1999)

At the same time that politicians in the former Yugoslavia repositioned themselves in relation to the international human rights community, a small radio station was established by a few unknown engineers in Belgrade, in a storage room of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Cofounders Veran Matić and Dražen Pantić recount the humble beginnings of the first independent radio station in postsocialist Serbia, consciously echoing the language of 1970s and 1980s opposition movements: “B92’s overall strategy: to create a world parallel to that established by the regime in order to feel that we were living outside the authoritarian, criminal state. Faced with the secrecy, isolation, and repression that characterize the regime, we took up the powerful weapon of transparency” (Matić and Pantić 1999). In a quick gloss that jumps from Hušák’s Czechoslovakia to Milošević’s Serbia, it can be difficult to remember that for Serbs the “secrecy, isolation, and repression” experienced in the 1990s was a shock. Life in late socialist Yugoslavia had been freer, and offered more mobility and opportunity than the political and cultural atmosphere under Milošević. Although Serbia was not directly involved in the war, the entire country was indirectly affected, first through media censorship, then through sanctions, visa restrictions, rationing of utilities,

and finally in 1999, NATO bombs. Radio B92 recreated the cultural system of *samizdat-tamizdat* when it was forced “beyond borders” by the censorship of the Milošević regime. From a media studies perspective, it is one of the first examples of using the Internet between East and West, as broadcast and print media had been used before 1989, to bring a campaign to the West and to recirculate materials underground within the home country.

In an article on the “saga” of Radio B92’s analog-to-digital conversion, Rita Csapó-Sweet and Donald Shields delineate some useful “rhetorical visions” of the station: alternative, political, alternative arts-lifestyle, pragmatic, independent (2000, 320–25). These designations are not meant to be chronological, but do trace a development from the station’s beginnings as an alternative source of news and culture, to its structural role as an independent media channel post-1996. I draw on these categories to show the logic of the cultural work-around—that is, how to circumvent an unmovable problem, in this case, Milošević. What makes the work-around a cultural, rather than a technological practice, is that behaviors, attitudes, and narratives changed once the radio station began broadcasting via the Internet.

The genesis of B92 was in fact in the cultural underground. In the late 1980s, Matic, Gordan Paunović, and others who eventually founded B92 ran an offbeat student radio show called *Ritam Crca* (Rhythm of the heart) (Collin 2001, 15). They chronicled the youth culture of the transition era, and were interested in politics, but more so in alternative lifestyles, music, art, and performance. *Ritam Crca*, the student activists who created B92 with them, and their fans and supporters did not appear out of nowhere. They were following in the legacy of generations of Belgrade intellectuals and artists who sought deeper answers in the philosophical margins of Yugoslav life. From the Praxis group’s quest for a coherent revision of Marxism in the 1970s, to the journal *Vidici*’s Foucauldian dismantling of the discourse of power in the 1980s, young subcultural minds had several models to draw from in their immediate milieu.¹⁰⁷ In the

¹⁰⁷ See Longinović 1994, and in particular his discussion of the latent totalitarianism that 1980s Yugoslav intellectuals felt all around them in the post-Tito era.

mid-1980s, the Slovene art collective Neue Slowenische Kunst was intensifying its unique brand of critique and role-play with fascism, performance artists like Marina Abramović and Ulan were gaining international renown, and the surrealism of New Primitivism had reached its peak in Sarajevo (Levi 2007, 62–78). Against this backdrop, starting an alternative cultural radio station and naming it after the emergency number used to call the police must have seemed a mildly ironic gesture to question authority. As others have pointed out before me, they did not start out with the goal of regime change.¹⁰⁸

Throughout the years that followed, the remains of the Federated Republic of Yugoslavia were becoming a steadily less free place to broadcast alternative voices. The outbreak of war in Bosnia early in 1992 was the turning point for overt censorship of state media. This is when Csapó-Sweet and Shield locate a shift to a new, *political* vision for the radio station, which began to broadcast news about the war as an “alternative news outlet” (2000, 321). While the station only had a license to broadcast to the central Belgrade area, its listenership grew as citizens not aligned with any alternative subculture became interested in receiving uncensored information about what was happening in Bosnia (Collin 2001, 52–55).¹⁰⁹ At this point, the authorities had not jammed or shut down B92’s signal, but only ordered the station to stop broadcasting news during a quasi-state of emergency. Yet there were several reasons Matić and his news team felt the need to broadcast beyond the borders of Serbia. Telephone lines to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia had been cut off by the regime, so journalists had to route their calls through Western capitals. In addition, B92 formed

¹⁰⁸ See Matthew Collin’s journalistic but thorough “biography” of B92 (Collin 2001); Silber and Matić (1997); and Matić (1997).

¹⁰⁹ Collin quotes the well-known columnist Teofil Pančić: “This dominant culture [of Milošević’s Serbian nationalism] was a culture of death; it celebrated death. . . . If you turned on the TV, what you saw was someone in a uniform trying to say to you that it’s great to be a soldier and go to Vukovar and die. Then you had so-called folksingers singing songs about Greater Serbia and Serbian soldiers and how we should all be willing to kill and be killed for it, to liberate our Serbian brothers and sisters in Croatia and Bosnia. It was so morbid and it was all around you: all those songs and people in uniform everywhere. . . . What B92 and others did was celebrate life; that’s the difference. They tried to remain normal and say that there is the possibility of another kind of life, a totally different society than the one that actually existed here” (55).

alliances with alternative radio stations in Sarajevo (Studio 99), Zagreb (Radio 101), and Ljubljana (Radio Student) (Collin 2001, 53–54), a preview of the work-around that full censorship of the radio station would bring.

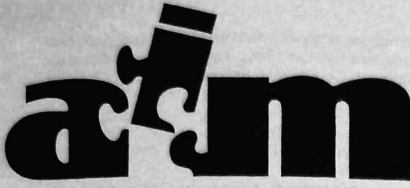
In 1994, B92 set up its first website, not to circumvent censorship but to support diversification of media platforms. B92 started a record label and film/video production studio, and began to disseminate their artistic projects via their website (this was the “alternative arts-lifestyle” vision identified by Csapó-Sweet and Shields):¹¹⁰ “People all over the world came into contact with our productions, our style, and our spirit, and they began to recognize themselves in what we were doing and thus become part of the creative resistance to the totalitarianism of Slobodan Milošević” (Matić and Pantić 1999).

In other words, the political-cultural activists of B92, who were doing their best to bring outside information and perspectives into a censored environment, also felt the need to enlist those from outside into their movement. This to me is the parallel between B92 and the Cold War system of *samizdat-tamizdat*, primarily because of the intersection of culture and politics and the editors’ insistence that consuming culture from “inside” was a kind of political resistance. I would liken the radio station’s profile in the early to mid-1990s to the political-cultural journals I have examined in the first three chapters of this book. After B92 was shut down and became a worldwide *cause célèbre* in 1996, its main mission became primarily information-driven,¹¹¹ what Csapó-Sweet and Shields call its “independent media” stage (2000, 323).

At the same time that B92 turned to the Internet as a work-around to circumvent censorship, there were several digital-born projects with

¹¹⁰ These films were on varied subjects, and the studio was quite prolific. “B92 produced many short, medium, even feature-length video works, both fictional and documentary, including Želimir Žilnik’s *Tito among the Serbs for the Second Time* (1994) and *Marble Ass* (1995), and Janko Baljak’s *The Crime that Changed Serbia* (1995), a prime work of cinematic urban anthropology, concerned with the preponderance of organized crime in Serbia” (Levi 2007, 111).

¹¹¹ Parallel examples from the Cold War would be the *Khronika tekushchikh sobytiy* (Chronicle of current events) published in Russia or the *Biuletyn informacyjny* (Informational bulletin) published in Poland.



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Review

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AIM (Alternativna Informativna mreza) is a network of independent journalists from all of the republics of former Yugoslavia linked together by a computer mail-box system. It was created in October 1992 and has three aims: to exchange articles and information between the republics of ex-Yugoslavia, to prepare the ground for the creation of independent media, and to provide an information service for the media, institutions and NGOs outside ex-Yugoslavia.

The AIM Review is made up of summaries of recent articles in the AIM network. The full texts of articles can be ordered either in English or Serbo-Croat. It is also possible to subscribe, via e-mail, to all of the material in the network in Serbo-Croat or to those articles which have been translated into English.

AIM BOSNIA - HERZEGOVINA

ON THE CURSED LAND OF BOSNIA (3) THE CORRIDOR (ORASJE, GUNJA, BRCKO)

Goran Todorovic

AIM, Sarajevo, July 10, 1994; At the improvised border crossing on the bank of the River Sava, you hardly know that you are leaving Croatia and crossing over to a new state, Bosnia. On both sides, in Zupanja and in Orasje, the picture is the same: policemen and border-guards in the same uniforms. Only the better informed can distinguish the emblem of Herzeg-Bosnia from that of Croatia. The Croatian flag is displayed on all visible places and the car registration plates are almost identical. We board a dilapidated ferry, the only possible link with Orasje in this tiny pocket under Croatian control abutting on the notorious Serb corridor. I look at the blown up bridge on the Sava to our left. I have been travelling through Bosnia a long time, but I always wonder how man can destroy in only a few seconds what he spent months and years building. Due to the proximity of Croatia people do not lack anything: from food to military support. Nevertheless, tree trunks piled beside many houses show that they still reckon with war. A smiling girl tells us her story. "I am from Bosanski Brod. We first felt what war was. They attacked us from all sides. Those in Sarajevo were still singing at peace concerts as though they saw nothing, while we were already leaving our homes." I think about the cruelty of this war: peaceful family people turned into fighters. Hatred has overtaken people like cancer, uncontrollably eating them from within. They dream only of revenge: hate the "others", over the sights of their rifles. The only vital determinant is one's

name and surname, the accidental fact that you are a Serb, a Croat or a Muslim. I have not yet met a man in Bosnia who does not have his own sad story. I did my military service in Brcko in the former YPA. Probably no region was more hospitable to soldiers than this one. The front line is only a few km from the city. If a decision is made to take the corridor, everything will be razed to the ground. We return along the road to Osijek. News on the Croatian Radio: "As we learn from Croatian Army Command, the Serbian forces broke the truce again, by opening fire..." It is not difficult to imagine the news on the other side. Despite the signed cease-fire, the media war continues.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SARAJEVO

Stražo Krsmanovic, Zijada Kravac

AIM, Sarajevo, July 12, 1994: According to William Eagleton, the UN administrator of Sarajevo, the reconstruction of the city's infrastructure will re-

The AIM Review wishes to inform its readers that it will not appear during the month of August. Ever since the network's creation, the different editorial teams have met every two months outside former Yugoslavia to coordinate their work. Once a year this takes the form of more detailed discussions over a whole week during the annual congress of the European Civic Forum in France. For this reason, less articles will be written in August. Rendez-vous in September! Do not forget that we are glad to receive your comments concerning the Review - and of course your subscriptions...

Figure 16. Tenth issue of the *AIM Review* (1994).
(Courtesy of the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives.)

ambitions to maintain a Yugoslav public sphere in virtual reality. A relatively unknown publication from this same period that resonates with the goals of *samizdat* and *tamizdat* was the monthly *Alternativna Informativna Mreza* (*Alternative Information Network*, or *AIM Review*), established in October 1992 as “a network of independent journalists from all the republics of the former Yugoslavia, linked together by a computer mailbox system” (*AIM Review* 1994, 1) (see Fig. 16). The mission statement printed at the top of the hard copy of each issue claimed three major goals for the publication: “to exchange articles and information between the republics of ex-Yugoslavia, to prepare the ground for the creation of independent media, and to provide an information service to the media, institutions, and NGOs outside ex-Yugoslavia.” The journal was published in Paris, available in English or Serbo-Croatian, and ran for at least twenty-six issues. Each issue also listed its financial supporters, ranging from pan-European funding bodies to individual NGOs. This review is the earliest example I have found of the *samizdat-tamizdat* system moving to electronic media in this region. Although the review itself existed in hard copies, it was constituted and distributed via e-mail. How effective this monthly was in reaching those beyond the NGOs supporting it is not clear, as I have never seen it referenced anywhere outside of the *Index on Censorship* archives. What interests me is the experiment of using a web-based medium at its infancy to circumvent barriers in traditional communication.

Another interesting 1990s experiment using the web to reconstitute the former Yugoslavia was the *Leksikon Yu Mitologije* (*Lexicon of Yu Mythology*), which was first conceived as a print-based project in 1989, to create a pop-cultural dictionary of myths and memes of the Yugoslav era. When Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in the early 1990s, however, the project was abandoned, only to resurface online in the early 1990s as a wiki-style dictionary, featuring contributions from the original editors, but also hundreds and hundreds of ex-Yugoslavs now scattered all over the globe (Labov 2007, 24–25). The website still exists today, although the format has changed dramatically over the years.¹¹² Like the *AIM Review*, it was

¹¹² See <http://www.leksikon-yu-mitologije.net>.

only able to reach a wider audience when the original editors (Iris Adrić, Vladimir Arsenijević, and Djordje Matić) produced a print volume which encapsulated the spirit and process of the web-based *Leksikon* (Adrić, Arsenijević, and Matić 2004). Aleksander Bošković characterizes the project as a ruin, “a ‘site of memory’ that is inherent to modernity itself,” and “a place of reference for a future cultural archaeology of everyday life in Yugoslav socialism” (2013, 61). The print volume certainly seems to have this character, not unlike what *Cross Currents* did for the myth of Central Europe, sharing an encyclopedic quality. However, the website as it existed in the mid-1990s was a space alive with voices remembering and testifying, arguing and flaming, and above all, *reappearing* from the void. Whereas *AIM* collected texts from inside, “smuggled” them out via the Internet, and then rebroadcast them back into the dismembered country via *tamizdat*, the *Leksikon* primarily collected texts from outside, and reconstituted the country in cyberspace. If we think of Central Europe as a virtual cultural space during the Cold War, only realizable in tracing the circulation of texts and/or in “snapshots” like *Cross Currents*, then the *Leksikon* online produced something similar, anticipating the sense of space and belonging that social networks would develop in the 2000s.

The last important virtual space created in the primordial ex-Yugoslav Internet was ANEM (Asocijacija nezavisnih elektronskih medija), the Association of Independent Electronic Media, founded in 1993 as a small coalition of radio stations that aimed “to unite existing isolated media as the first step towards breaking the state-controlled media’s monopoly.”¹¹³ The organization still exists today, and has evolved into a media policy watchdog NGO, primarily concerned with monitoring media law, educating people in media literacy, and other useful but unglamorous tasks to build up Serbian civil society. Its beginnings were more dramatic, as it challenged the political and commercial monopoly of state-controlled media over the airwaves. ANEM was one of the main targets of the Milošević regime’s legal aggression, which initially intimidated some broadcasters, but eventually strengthened their solidarity.

¹¹³ See <http://www.anem.rs/en/oAnemu/intranet.html>.

Until the mid-1990s, the world outside of Yugoslavia was likely unaware of the existence of *AIM Review*, the *Leksikon*, ANEM, and B92. But in the aftermath of the 1996 elections, when the dictator began to fear for the first time that he was losing the faith of his population, many in the world came to “recognize themselves in what [B92] was doing,” and “become a part of the creative resistance to the totalitarianism of Slobodan Milošević,” as Matić and Pantić claim (1999). Just a year after Milošević, Tudjman, and Izetbegović signed the Dayton Peace Accord, a coalition of all parties except the ruling United Yugoslav Left (JUL), called Zajedno (Together), won the majority of the vote in all major Serbian cities. When Milošević declared the election invalid, people took to the streets.¹¹⁴ Collin paints a detailed portrait of these demonstrations, which were also recreated faithfully in Srdjan Dragojević’s 1998 film *Rane* (Wounds). While most protesters were average Serbian citizens from all walks of life, the most visible and memorable group were the student protestors, who used every means available to create street theater as an expression of their rejection of the regime:

They employed the sophisticated visual language of advertising agencies to twist orthodox political protest into something smarter, hipper, and considerably more inspiring. Their essence was inherited from the student uprising of the summer of 1968 (in which many of their parents had participated), but they were also influenced by the dramatic antiwar and pro-democracy actions of the 1990s, . . . the whistles and drums, the uproarious racket which permeated the cityscape until long after dark, combined the Dionysian abandon of Brazilian samba parties with the hedonistic excess of rave culture, which had recently erupted in Belgrade’s clubs. (2001, 108)

Paunović comments that the outside world was surprised by the Situationist wit and artistic chaos of these groups because their only vision of Serbs for the past several years had been that of war criminals and Milošević’s henchmen (Collin 2001, 109). Anyone who was tuned into the perfor-

¹¹⁴ See Lazić 1999 for a detailed account of these months.

mance art, theatrical experimentations, postmodern pastiche, and the punk rock scene in the last twenty years of Yugoslav/Serbian life should not have been surprised. Furthermore, the DJs and editors of B92 saw these demonstrations as an instantiation of their aesthetics *and* politics. This is what B92 had been broadcasting over the air, disseminating over the Internet, and was now visible in the streets.

It was during these demonstrations that the Milošević regime shut down Radio B92's signal—for fifty hours, from December 2 to 4, 1996 (Lazić 1999, 14). In one of the strangest coincidences in media history, as recorded by Matić and Pantić, B92 had that very day been granted a dedicated phone line, which guaranteed the station's ability to continue to disseminate information without a radio signal. Dražen Pantić was the main force behind the web-based B92; a year before he had set up Open-Net for B92, the first ISP in Serbia (Collin 2001, 113). When the radio signal was interrupted, the station—and those in ANEM aligned with them—took immediate steps to continue to disseminate news. They sent news briefs over e-mail; they sent RealAudio files to foreign radio stations (BBC and Voice of America); its website was mirrored around the world to protect its content and access (114). This exponential increase in their media footprint did not stop when the government lifted the ban: "Immediately afterward, B92 was able—through funds provided equally by the BBC, the British Foreign Office, USAID, the European Union, and George Soros's Open Society Foundation—to gain access to a satellite that linked twenty-eight independent local radio stations, covering seventy percent of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" (Silber and Matić 1997). Government censorship accidentally promoting a countercultural cause beyond national borders was a frequent enough symptom of Cold War tensions.

Longinović mentions this dynamic in 1980s Belgrade, in reference to *Vidici's* "Dictionary of Technology": "The decision to ban the issue of an intellectual journal with relatively small circulation (1,500 copies) was one of the last acts of censorship over intellectual life in Yugoslavia by the already weakened Communist establishment. The ban was a symptom of a growing panic after Tito's death among his ideological offspring, since the political influence of the *Vidici* group was certainly negligible in comparison to the media uproar caused by the ban" (1994, 122). If B92 had only

rerouted its signal through a satellite to reach seventy-eight radio stations in Serbia and Montenegro, without involving any Internet technology, the paradigm would not have changed. I argue that this moment in B92's history established their lineage in the history of East European countercultural movements from 1968 through the end of socialism *and* introduced a new narrative about the transition to new media. By the time the Serbian opposition formed a recognizable political movement in 1998 (Otpor), the identity of the movement was now fused to its use of new media in terms of its internal identification, the mythopoetic "saga" described by Csapó-Sweet and Shield (2000, 327–28), and in the projection of liberal democratic ideals onto the technology itself.

Before I elaborate on the implications of this moment and how the Otpor "toolkit" was exported to other revolutions via workshops in regime-toppling, I would like to reflect on the technological determinism suggested by the "Internet Revolution," as David Bennahum described the Serbian opposition to Milošević in the late 1990s.¹¹⁵ Why was that medium seen as more emancipatory as a means to transfer texts across borders? We can see a contrast between the perception of printed *samizdat*, radio, television, and film, *all* of which played important roles in disseminating information across the Iron Curtain and between satellite countries. The practice of writing, printing, smuggling, reading, and circulating texts was closely aligned in Western eyes with liberal values and dissent from communism, so much so that the nuanced character of debates in *tamizdat* (among reform Marxists in the 1960s, for example), or the existence of non-liberal *samizdat*, was often ignored. Foreign radio broadcasting was often thought of as a "weapon" of communication in propaganda wars, but not as inherently liberating except to its direct advocates. Other broadcast media were considered even less so, as their effect was deemed primarily cultural and not political. So why did access to the Internet (and later, mobile technology) during the Milošević regime become equated

¹¹⁵ Bennahum's article (1997) is governed by the same metaphor of maturity that would later thematize his book *Extra Life: Coming of Age in Cyberspace* (1998), in which his own adolescence coincides with the entry of the computer into everyday life. Serbians, according to this narrative, have reached a "mature" moment, in which the engagement with this technology can effect political change.

with access to information, freedom of expression, and therefore with democratic values and norms?

Cyberactivism in think tanks and universities was central to that era. The connection between human rights and new media was being explicitly made at conferences such as “Data Conflicts: Cyberspace and the Geopolitics of Eastern Europe” (December 1996).¹¹⁶ The newsletter archives of the Albert Einstein Institute (a one-man think tank founded and run by the disproportionately influential Gene Sharp) reveal a turn towards the digital at the time.¹¹⁷ Recent works by James Aulich (2011) and Evgeny Mozorov (2011) critique this logic aggressively, from leftist and liberal directions, respectively. I will return to these arguments in the conclusion, to make a case for the continuity of web-based circulation of texts with the *samizdat-tamizdat* system, without importing the determinist and democratizing mandates often associated with that Cold War narrative. More importantly, keeping the framework of the cultural work-around in mind, the object of analysis remains the productive and creative expressions formed to find free pathways, to interpret distortions, and to create virtual communities, rather than projecting an agenda onto those expressions to accomplish a political goal.

Few of those writing about the “Internet Revolution” in Serbia dwell on the range of media practices of Otpor and B92. The emphasis usually remains on their use of the Internet. Aulich and Collin both emphasize the offline components of the Otpor campaign: “[In addition to Otpor’s networked actions online], physical actions, graffiti, posters, and stickers continued to play a vital part. Through its ‘marketing’ section, for example, Otpor was responsible for the logistics of distributing up to sixty tons of campaign material in the lead up to the elections of 24 September 2000” (Aulich 2011, 9). Aulich, trained as an art historian, is coauthor of a book on the visual iconography of the 1989 revolutions, and pays special attention to the graphic profile of Otpor and how it circulated both online and offline. He is also sensitive to what they borrowed from the performance art and happenings of 1980s Yugoslavia, most explicitly in their use of

¹¹⁶ See <http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9612/msg00010.html>.

¹¹⁷ See <http://www.aeinstein.org/newsletter-archives/>.

“over-identification” in the style of *Neue Slowenische Kunst*, such as the action celebrating Milošević’s birthday, or the appropriation of partisan symbology in their logo and graphic design elements (12).¹¹⁸ And this phenomenon is not limited to Eastern Europe or antiauthoritarianism, either. In the 2000s we have seen artists such as Shepard Fairey and Banksy, inspired by *Neue Slowenische Kunst*, direct their critique towards concerns such as police practices, commercial advertising, copyright, and the links between street culture and curated spaces such as galleries and museums (Fairey 2009). It is connections between the development of cyberspace as a social/political space and the physical presence of activists in streets, squares, and civic spaces that was novel in Serbia in the late 1990s. I would like to navigate between the cyber-utopists and democratization gurus in a discussion of events in Ukraine during the 2004 Orange Revolution, and of Belarus during the 2000s, to argue the singular importance of these cultural work-arounds in the postsocialist world.

Ukraine, Belarus, and beyond Central Europe (2000s): From Online to Offline Work-Arounds

The idea that there was a transfer of knowledge from 1990s Serbia to the “color revolutions” of the 2000s (and later to various groups involved in the Arab Spring) is a popular narrative among journalists, democracy advocates, and conspiracy theorists. Journalists favor these anecdotes because they feature brave and charismatic individuals in David-and-Goliath scenarios, simplifying complex political situations for the general reader (e.g., Rosenberg 2011). Linking these revolutions is an example of what political scientists call “modular” political phenomena, “action based in significant part on emulation of the prior successful example of others,” which makes the process of democratization seem predictive and formulaic enough to quantify and typologize (Beissinger 2007, 259). At the same time, for every

¹¹⁸ The figure of the partisan fighter during the Second World War was recycled and circulated in both Tito’s and Milošević’s Yugoslavia, to the point that it had become so overdetermined as to seem absurd. Aulich sees Otpor’s use of it as a reappropriation via this absurdity, in the vein of Laibach’s and Irwin’s art practices.

journalist or academic who writes a success story about the customization of nonviolent regime change, there is a blogger “chasing the money” and finding Western imperial footprints dirtying every scenario.¹¹⁹ There is no reason to be skeptical about the good intentions and helpfulness of CANVAS (Center for Applied Nonviolent Actions and Strategies), the small group from Otpor that tried to package regime change into workshops and toolkits for revolution, and then traveled to Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine, and Egypt, among other sites. What is harder to believe is that this group, with or without foreign aid, has been the most important correlative factor in the mobilization of people and antiauthoritarian protest movements in the above scenarios.

When we read accounts of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine written in the years following the successful removal of President Leonid Kuchma and the installation of Viktor Yushchenko as a legally elected president, the story is often told as an echo of 1989 and of the Bulldozer Revolution in Serbia in 2000.¹²⁰ There is a strong teleological view implied in these accounts, suggesting that protest movements in each of these countries have followed a formula that will be repeated in the other “color revolutions,” and eventually in every authoritarian society. Mark Beissinger goes so far as to cite an actual formula:

- 1) the use of stolen elections as the occasion for massive mobilizations against pseudo-democratic regimes;
- 2) foreign support for the development of local democratic movements;
- 3) the organization of radical youth movements using unconventional protest tactics prior to the election in order to undermine the regime’s popularity and will to repress and to prepare for a final showdown;
- 4) a united opposition established in part through foreign prodding;
- 5) external diplomatic pressure and unusually large electoral monitoring; and
- 6) massive mobilization upon the announcement of fraudulent electoral results and the use of nonviolent resistance tactics taken directly from

¹¹⁹ See <http://landdestroyer.blogspot.com/2011/02/cia-coup-college.html>.

¹²⁰ See, for example, Epstein et al. 2006; Shulman 2005; and especially Beissinger 2007.

the work of Gene Sharp, the guru of nonviolent resistance in the West. (Beissinger 2007, 261)

Instead of following the narrative of specific political actors such as CANVAS, I would like to trace how the practice of transferring texts, information, and ideas across borders continued in important ways in Ukraine leading up to the Orange Revolution, and in Belarus in the 2000s. As with the case of Transatlantic Central Europe, the point is not to prove that these measures did or did not topple the regime; rather, my interest is in the expressions generated by cultural work-arounds in these semi-censored environments, as well as in the dynamic between the virtual and real worlds. These two dimensions were present during the *samizdat-tamizdat* era as well, but there is more deliberate manipulation of them in the post-socialist contexts (for example, assembling bodies in physical space via the Internet or mobile technology).

Ukraine's media environment between 1998 and 2004 was very different from Milošević's Serbia, or Belarus under Lukashenko.¹²¹ This was a hybrid model, in which there were some media outlets owned by the state, and some privatized; censorship existed, but without ideological goals, only to preserve the consolidation of power by Kuchma and the oligarchs who owned the two largest media companies (Dychok 2006, 222). The major broadcast media platforms were under tight supervision, though not officially censored.¹²² Access to the Internet, by contrast, was more or less unrestricted, and although there was surveillance of Internet activity, there were not yet many controls. This led some, like Taras Kuzio, one of the most well-known scholars of Ukraine politics in the West, to declare that "the Internet is Ukraine's new *samizdat*" (2002).¹²³

¹²¹ For a more detailed treatment of what Keith Darden calls "media in a blackmail state," see Darden (2001), and Levitsky and Way (2002).

¹²² In her article on this topic, Marta Dychok (2006) elaborates in great detail how this worked via *temnyky*, or warnings from an unknown source to state and media outlets about what *not* to report from the day's news.

¹²³ It should also be noted that in Kuzio's RFE/RL report on this topic, he mentions media only once in passing, in a short paragraph detailing the training of Pora by Otpor and the coming in of funds from various Western organizations to support their activities (2005, 127).

As was the case with *samizdat*, those who wished to limit the importance of the Internet in places like Ukraine and Serbia are likely to point to the fact that less than half of the population is actively using it (around 40 percent in 2001, according to Kuzio 2002). Dychok asserts that this was most likely why the government did not bother to censor it (2006, 225). However, the impact of the Internet could be felt well beyond the small numbers of people who had access, and when the political activists of Pora (the largest wing of the young, alternative opposition movement) and counterculturally minded IT experts joined forces, they looked for ways to generate offline interest from online tools. Beyond high-profile websites like Heorhiy Gongadze's *Ukrainska Pravda*,¹²⁴ there were high- and low-tech work-arounds, which ranged from P2P radio streaming, widespread use of stencils, stickers, and "blue-jacking,"¹²⁵ writing on currency, and streaming video of recent events. Some of these techniques were the result of a direct transfer of knowledge from Otpor, but many were adaptations from the Ukrainian media environment and alternative lifestyles.¹²⁶ Finally, in Ukraine, as in Serbia, e-mail and mobile technology was used to assemble large numbers of people for demonstrations, but not yet into the Situationist-flavored flash mobs that would take over Belarus in the later 2000s.

To introduce Belarus into any discussion of postsocialist societies is to suddenly sound like an exceptionalist. According to organizations such as Freedom House, which dedicate themselves to gauging a society's openness, freedom of expression and movement, and level of democratization, this former Soviet republic is usually on the far end of the authoritarian spectrum.¹²⁷ Many members of the academic and professional classes work

¹²⁴ Gongadze was a political journalist who was murdered by unknown assailants in September 2000, most likely as a form of political repression for his reporting on corruption and election fraud.

¹²⁵ Cell phone service disruptions that could broadcast a message to all cell phones and portable listening devices within a short distance, used most effectively on public transportation, and usually just to advertise another Pora event.

¹²⁶ These observations are based on several reports by and personal communications with Viktor Radchenko, an IT specialist who was an active member of the Pora team in carrying out these online-offline experiments.

¹²⁷ See their report "Worst of the Worst 2011: The World's Most Repressive Societies": <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/WorstOfTheWorst2011.pdf>.

and live in neighboring countries, or live within the country in a state of suspension, waiting for signs of change. However, the country as a whole seems to stand behind a concept of “Belarusianness” which is also supported by the state, lending at least a nominal support for Alexander Lukashenko and his politics. Nelly Bekus, a Belarusian journalist who has been a strong advocate for bringing more Western attention to the repression and stagnancy of the Lukashenko regime, writes about the unusual character of the journalistic environment there: “The official media in Belarus are a supplement to the authorities and a propaganda device; they serve not only to articulate the ideological message and to present the vision of Belarusian life reflected in the state ideological ‘mirror’ but also to promote the official concept of Belarusianness in general” (2010, 8). In other words, the press is doing more than parroting the policies of the state; it is also reifying the nation.

In 2004–2006, the years of the “color revolutions,” when Ukraine (orange), Georgia (rose), then Kyrgyzstan (tulip) showed signs of democratic change, the United States also advocated for change in Belarus.¹²⁸ Otpor members visited with Belarusian activists during this period, and in April 2005 the Belarusian opposition held a protest against the Lukashenko regime with about 2,500 participants (as opposed to 600,000 in Serbia and Montenegro, 100,000 in Georgia, and one million in Ukraine) (Beissinger 2007, 263). It was not just the relative size of the demonstration, however, but the force with which it was repressed, that dampened any hopes of momentum. Belarus became known as the color revolution that was not (blue), and returned to its state of suspended animation for the rest of the 2000s.

During this period, patterns of *samizdat-tamizdat* emerged eerily similar to those of the Cold War era, with émigrés forming a ring of publishing and broadcasting activity around the borders of the country. In Moscow, a group of Belarusians (mostly students at the Russian State University for the Humanities) started several journals over the course of the 2000s. When the European Humanities University in Minsk was shut down in

¹²⁸ Beissinger writes: “In October 2004 President Bush signed the Belarus Democracy Act, which authorizes assistance to pro-democracy activism in Belarus with the intention of overthrowing the Lukashenka regime” (2007, 261).

2005, the entire faculty and student body found itself “in exile” in Vilnius, from where they continued the daily life of academics, publishing papers and studies about Belarus right across its borders. The Polish state-run television channel Telewizja Polska operates Bielsat, which broadcasts Belarusian TV programming in both Belarusian and Russian. And there are several small, pirate radio stations operating in Poland and Ukraine, as well as streaming over the Internet. Finally, there is the Belarusian Internet: filtered, hacked, mirrored, emulated, proxied, and ultimately still functioning as a channel of information for those inside and outside the country.¹²⁹ While all these instances of virtual communications echo the cross-border traffic of underground and émigré movements of the Cold War, the great cultural work-around that contemporary Belarus has added to the repertoire of alternative media practices is the flash mob. Belarusians did not invent the flash mob, but they repurposed it to work in a new way in their unique situation.

The first known example of a flash mob, called the Mob Project, was recorded in New York City, in the summer of 2003, and had no explicit purpose at all.¹³⁰ Although there might have been earlier instances of people gathering in one physical space after receiving instructions online to do so (for example, for a party or musical event), what distinguished the Mob Project was that all it did was demonstrate an alternative use of public space. Gathering large numbers of people in one indoor space without permission from an owner creates a civic tension, and as the Mob Project went on, it had to enact more and more diversionary tactics to keep the police from interfering. Eventually, Bill Wasik, the creator of the Mob Project, ended the project, and gave no explicit reason: “It can’t be explained. Like the individual mobs, the Mob Project appeared for no reason, and like the mobs it must disperse.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ See Diebert (2008).

¹³⁰ One very often cited authority on this topic is Howard Rheingold, who takes credit for coining the term “smart mob,” forecasting the widespread use of Internet and cellular technology to gather people in public spaces (*Rheingold 2002*). Another authority on this particular topic is the author, who was a participant in the Mob Project, a series of eight gatherings in New York City, June–September 2003.

¹³¹ Excerpt from Mob Project #8. Personal e-mail to author.

What distinguished flash mobs in the wake of the Mob Project from other forms of activism in urban centers in the 2000s is that they retained a legacy of absurdity, of revelry in the lack of meaning, in favor of the simple aesthetic of disruption. The vast majority of flash mobs, to this day, present themselves as apolitical (although an increasing number in recent years have become more commercial). At the height of their popularity in the mid-2000s, they became the primary forms of urban activism in Minsk, Belarus, and took on a marked political character. Almira Ousmanova (2010) provides the deepest insight into how these abstract expressions of disruption—for example, gathering thirty people in an urban square to eat ice cream together—can, in fact, assume political meaning. One first has to take into account the complete hegemony of the Belarusian government in public spaces, reproducing itself through posters, monuments, buildings, and so on. The presence of public art unsanctioned by the state is itself transgressive, Ousmanova argues, in the face of government monopoly of the visual field. She then compares the actions of the flash mobbers to Debord's description of Situationist actions, which use "playful strategies of devalorization, aimed at the singularization of all events, things, and positions" (Debord, quoted in Ousmanova). So whereas flash mobs are theoretically apolitical in the Western context,

[i]n the Belarusian context, the special attraction of flash mobs can as well be attributed to a number of other important factors, such as: the methods of suppression of the political heterodoxy used by Lukashenko's regime, the split within oppositional camp, the growth of youth activity as against the indifference and inertness of the majority of the population, the shortage of creative thinking in a political life as a whole, and, set against this rather bleak background, the formation of new kinds of social interaction. In brief, flash mobs create a "spectacle" of resistance in a situation of a political stasis. . . . These seem to represent the only possible strategy for avoiding the creation of a "political subjectivity" that could easily be identified and, thus, appropriated by power, and so extinguished from the political field. (Ousmanova 2010)

Even more importantly in the 2010s, flash mobs could be seen as the first organized experiments in the translation of online political activity into offline physical spaces. The Occupy movement which took over public spaces in commercial centers all over the world, the physical occupation of Tahrir Square in Egypt 2011, and more recently, the Euromaidan in Kiev, 2014, all suggest that this new constellation of online-to-offline activism is a part of our political reality.¹³² In this scenario, how do we distinguish between new media practices “imported” from outside as an alternative lifestyle/build-your-own-revolution toolkit, and those that have evolved in a more organic way, responding to people’s need for information and desire for social connection? Does it matter that there were political actors from outside of the country, financed by USAID? And if the Serbian opposition movement’s visual and performative vocabulary was truly so embedded in the context of the Yugoslav 1980s, how could this language be “translated” into Ukrainian (and then Georgian, Belarusian, Kyrgyz, and so on) without a larger context? And finally, if we are still tracing the transfer of texts and information across borders, where exactly does cyberspace lie? Is it *samizdat*, *tamizdat*, or both?

These questions are at the heart of the inspiration to connect the case of Transatlantic Central Europe with other cultural work-arounds discussed in this book. If we direct those questions to the Central European essayists writing about a region that did not physically exist, I would argue that what united their efforts was much more than a political goal, that there are shared elements of cultural heritage across the region; that the format in which they present their views (in the case of the Cold War, primarily the political-cultural journal and the essay) has a particular meaning because of its history; and that the dissemination of their words

¹³² The Winter 2015 issue of *Slavic Review* featured one of the most extensive polemics to date in Slavic Studies over interpretations of the 2013–2014 Maidan protests in Ukraine, beginning with Timothy Snyder’s “decolonization” paradigm, and continuing with diverse refutations of his ideas. Of interest here is that two of Snyder’s critics propose that the proper way to understand the Maidan is through a close analysis of its “forms, processes, and actors of societal self-organization and grass-roots activism” (Portnov 2015, 730–31). Yaroslav Hrytsak even points to a continuity with “social phenomena [such as] the Occupy movement, Blotonaia Square in Turkey, and student protests in Bulgaria and Hong Kong” (2015, 737).

via the *samizdat-tamizdat* system did amplify and distort its meaning, but not necessarily in corrosive ways. The virtuality of their Central Europe, which looked slightly different to whoever defined it, was not a source of statelessness but rather a transcendence of national and ethnic boundaries.

From this point of view, we can view the shared tactics, local articulations, and cyber-paradigms among the wired activists of the color revolutions as a similarly broad cultural work-around. Their political causes were similar, though not identical. What is common to these protestors of the 2000s is a generational perspective on the postsocialist and post-Soviet world, a mutually developed practice of cyberactivism, and hybrid but effective ways of transferring political potential in the virtual world into physical activity in the real. They share sensitivities, affinities, and technologies. They do not “mean” liberal democratic change, and nor does their medium, any more than the use of the radio meant liberal democratic change.

Redefining Transatlantic Central Europe Today

The concept of Central Europe is not an invention of Kundera. You have an obsession that it is an invention of Kundera. Not at all.

—Czesław Miłosz to Joseph Brodsky,
May 8, 1988, Lisbon

Is Transatlantic Central Europe still with us today? If by this we mean an explicit argument for Central Europe as a distinct cultural sphere, as a contestation with the geographic label of Eastern Europe, then we would have to look to the new political and economic realities of Europe for an answer. The countries that were invoked most often as Central European in the essays of the 1980s are now member states of the European Union, partners in NATO, and/or participants in several other pan-European or transatlantic organizational bodies. Therefore, if the goal of the movement to reinvent Central Europe was simply to achieve political recognition as non-“Eastern,” then that has been achieved, and there would be no need to continue that argument.

Yet the argument for Central Europe did not become irrelevant for purely political reasons, through having fulfilled some set of concrete goals, as much as through the subversive influence of individual biographies—such as those of Matejka, Kundera, Miłosz, or Kiš. In their profiles we find the general dilemma of the writer in politics: how to be effectively engaged, to act through one’s writing in the form of an essay, without risking a loss of aesthetic autonomy. Another way of understanding the end of the movement would be that some writers who had linked Central European-

ness most strongly with an anti-imperial or anti-Soviet stance had no way to continue with this identification. Others, like Kiš or Matejka, whose idea of Central Europe was held together by a self-perpetuating tension between ethnic difference and regional identification, such as that of Yugoslavia, were unable to continue once that tension was directed towards violence.

Furthermore, if by Transatlantic Central Europe we mean to describe a larger set of relationships and practices, as well as a wider geographic framework, then it certainly still exists today. As long as there is an eastern border to Europe, there will be a dilemma for those cultural actors who are forced to define themselves as Eastern or Western—for instance, the Ukrainian artists and writers who have been asked to declare their allegiance to either Russia or Europe in the wake of recent violence and separatism. At the same time, access to resources across Central and South-eastern Europe has become increasingly uneven, with a growing gap in economic and social mobility between urban and rural areas (Bohle and Greskovits 2012). The region has not yet been so much “Westernized,” as marketized, which means that on both the material and conceptual level the center-periphery dynamic between West and East remains (Kaser 2010). In other words, there is still a distinct profile to the countries once designated “Central European,” whether they are labeled “postsocialist” by scholars or “new/aspiring member states” by pundits. For all the variation and divergence in political regimes and policies since 1989, these countries are still grouped together as an object for comparative analysis.

Today’s Transatlantic Central Europe also exists as a system of information exchange from émigré worlds to home countries and back. Although few of the media environments exert any direct censorship over public discourse, voices from beyond borders still resonate in a particular way at home. I have written elsewhere about the long decade of debate in Poland over Jan T. Gross’s work concerning Polish culpability in the mass murder of Polish Jews during and after the Second World War (Labov 2011). His first book directly on this topic, *Sąsiedzi*, was published in 2000, but it was not until the English-language translation *Neighbors* came out in 2001 that the book started to provoke a transatlantic conversation between Polish Jewish émigrés abroad, their American audience, and the Polish audience

at home. Gross's work and the debates surrounding it provide us with an excellent example of the feedback loop that continues to operate across the former Iron Curtain, despite the fact that the geopolitical border has been diminished.

This is how the example of Transatlantic Central Europe, while not intended to be exportable as a paradigm to any environment, can still be a productive point of entry into the study of globalization and migration. The mode of cultural work-around straddling minor literatures and self-inventions speaks to past moments of regionalism in literary studies (such as the Caribbean and the Black Atlantic), but also to emerging approaches to tracing cultural exchange through emigration, diaspora, and new types of circulating texts. Diaspora studies has now merged with media studies in interesting ways to track the global flows of information, people, and goods that impact both home and host countries.¹³³ What we learn from Transatlantic Central Europe is that work-arounds established in one geopolitical moment carry forward into others; that the waves of émigrés from before and after 1989 inhabit the same spaces, and blend their respective experiences of the host culture. In diaspora, the historical framework of national history is more flexible. Reactionary and progressive views of the nation *beyond the nation* simultaneously circulate and constitute each other, and at times even transcend those questions to a regional identity that overwrites the national.

If the first chapter of this book presents a literary and material history of one journal, and the second chapter traces the intellectual history behind its founding, the third chapter merges these two more traditional modes of inquiry with a wider extraterritorial and diasporic perspective. In addition to its direct antecedents, *Cross Currents* must be understood as one voice in an array of political and literary voices in emigration. It would not have existed—and hence Transatlantic Central Europe would not have been so visibly established in the 1980s—without the presence of other political and cultural journals in each writer's respective native language. Just as the

¹³³ See Baser and Swain (2008) on diasporic peacemakers in homeland conflicts, Ding 2007 on the diasporic influence on the Chinese national imaginary, and particularly Axel (2004), which challenges the basic assumption of “a homeland that is said to be originary and constitutive of a dispersed collectivity” (45).

Western-looking, avant-garde Transylvanian Hungarian journals saw themselves as providing an alternative voice to the more patriotic and nationalist publications both in and out of Hungary, and just as *Kultura* developed in a cultural dialogue with *Wiadomości*, this supranational, regional idea of Central Europe could only be promoted if the minor cultures represented in it were already firmly established in other venues.

Another way of looking at that same pattern of émigré settlements and publishing projects, as well as their points of connection with the homeland, is through one of the subfields of Cold War studies: the *samizdat-tamizdat* system. Here the emphasis is less on the diaspora, and more on the connections between the underground movements in former Soviet Bloc countries, and their counterparts in emigration. In the edited volume *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond: Transnational Media During and After Socialism* (2013), Friederike Kind-Kovács and I insist on an expansive understanding of the terms *samizdat* and *tamizdat*, in order to bring scholarship on these topics away from a politically realist view towards an embedded and multilayered *histoire croisée*. What *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond* and this book share in common is the project of developing a more comprehensive picture of the outposts of Transatlantic Central European influence in postwar Europe and America. Paris is a well-known node of such activity, with journals such as *Lettres Internationales*, the *Paris Review*, *Magyar Füzetek*, and the sister publications of *Kultura*: *Zeszyty Literackie* and *Zeszyty Historyczne*. However, there were less obvious sites of *tamizdat* activity during the Cold War, such as Munich (which housed Radio Free Liberty/Radio Europe), Stockholm, Naples, and Berlin. The role of émigré journals in Israel is also interesting, and at times provided a bridge between Soviet Bloc countries and the West (Orel 1999). Friederike Kind-Kovács's *Written Here, Published There: How Underground Literature Crossed the Iron Curtain* is the first book-length study of *tamizdat* and its role in the *samizdat-tamizdat* system (2014). She pays special attention to the role of foreign radio broadcasting in mobilizing and curating the movement of texts, as well as their dissemination in Western languages for a much wider audience than émigré journals could reach.

Similarly, the GIS-mapping project of *Kultura* at the end of the third chapter is just one demonstration of how we might visualize the *samizdat-*

tamizdat system. In the next stage of this research project, I will be working with a small team at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives to mine other Cold War era publications and broadcasts for information about their circulation and impact. Although there are few that can claim the cultural-gatekeeper status that *Kultura* achieved in its forty-year run, weaving them into a dense tapestry of print, radio, and eventually other forms of art and media can suggest new relationships across émigré groups, and dimensions of change over time that would not be visible to the casual reader/listener of these texts. The eventual goal is to be able to trace the path of a single text produced in either *samizdat* or *tamizdat* as it circulated through the media system: for instance, a poem written “for the desk drawer” in Czechoslovakia that was smuggled via Berlin to Munich to be read over the air on Radio Free Europe broadcasts in several different languages; then transcribed and republished underground and in emigration to be read by a wider audience all over the world. The result should give us a way to read that text which goes beyond literary history—it means, in fact, a way of reading literature both distantly and closely, through the filters of history and geography.

The last chapter of this book, which carries the issues raised about the 1980s forward across new borders and new media, also raises some difficult questions about what happens to the political philosophy of liberalism during the postsocialist period in Central and Southeastern Europe. Due to the powerful binaries of Cold War thinking, there was a tight bundling of many different planks in the liberal democratic platform: freedom of movement, speech, assembly, markets, and political pluralism were all part of the anticommunist and antiauthoritarian position. By the end of the late socialist period, the different strains of Marxist revisionism that had been debated in the 1950s and 1960s, and even some aspects of liberal humanism that had been critical of consumerism in the 1970s, were drowned out by the political force of liberalism as a primarily anticommunist movement. It is easy enough to notice that in the early years of the transition era, the liberal humanist perspective shared by Havel, Konrád, Kundera, and Michnik was quickly replaced by an economic liberalism that evolved into neoliberal policies and practices. The last chapter of this book points to two *other* major trajectories of liberalism after 1989: one is the technologi-

cally deterministic belief that greater access to Internet technology will lead to higher quotients of democratic practice;¹³⁴ the other is the libertarian extreme of the Cold War concern with freedom of expression, that information must be freed by any means necessary.¹³⁵ The first belief, that Internet communications technology will inevitably democratize, was fueled by the color revolutions, successful or not, and eventually by the use of social media and mobile technology during the Iranian Green Revolution of June 2009, and the Arab Spring in 2012. Journalists jumped on comparisons between Libya, Egypt, and Eastern Europe in 1989, to point to a transhistorical and context-independent equation between access to technology and successful revolution. One goal of future studies inspired by this book should be to correct that misunderstanding, and insist on a more culturally specific analysis of the politics of media practices.

Other cultural work-arounds that continue the trajectory of Transatlantic Central Europe will continue to emerge, both because of the legacy of the debates about Central Europe and because of the dynamics of media crossing borders between regimes of greater and lesser censorship. The best outcome for the reader of this book will not be an easy toolkit of how to bring down a dictator, but a finer and more careful attention to émigrés' attempts to create culture abroad (now more and more often in an online environment instead of in the twentieth-century print and broadcast media), especially noticing those moments when the virtuality of émigré life contributes to and/or constitutes an alternative cultural public sphere to that available in the country of origin. When a cultural work-around of this type emerges, it is likely to bring with it important political and aesthetic expressions that will inform that culture's imagination of itself, as well as how it is seen around the world.

How does one redefine a culture in a virtual space? How does one contest geography from a position of statelessness? These two questions could

¹³⁴ See, for example, Simon, Coralles, and Wolfensberger (2002); Saco (2002); Schuler and Day (2004); and all publications by Gene Sharp: <http://www.aeinstein.org>.

¹³⁵ Here the best examples might be statements by figures like Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, and Julian Assange, recently caught up in freedom of information controversies, as well as the actions of the cyber-guerilla group Anonymous. See, for example, Assange's speech to the World Press Forum, when he compared himself to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

be asked by people all over the globe today. Transatlantic Central Europe allows us to think about them in a world before social media, when participating in this virtual space meant waiting patiently for a letter or a journal to arrive from overseas, or when crossing a border could be a life-long decision from which there was no turning back. In this book we encountered the hybrid identities and cantankerous personalities of those who made such choices and then had to invent new strategies for linguistic and cultural survival. They lead us back into the deepest thicket at the end of Chapter One, to the fundamental problem of how a writer or essayist can function in such a polarized and politicized world. On the one hand, they step forward to engage and represent as public intellectuals, but in doing so, on the other hand, they are also flattening the reception of their past and future work.

If we return once more to Danilo Kiš's "Variations on a Theme of Central Europe," he formulates the problem as follows in variation thirty-six:

The writer of Central Europe has stood for a long time between two kinds of reductionism: ideological and nationalistic. After a long period of temptation, he will understand that he cannot find the ideals of the "open society" in either one sphere or the other that constitute the only choice open to him. He will ultimately discover his only legitimacy in language and in literature, that "strange and mysterious consolation" Kafka speaks of. A dangerous and liberating attachment, a "leap beyond the level of murderers." But this choice cannot be made without perplexity: no one can place himself outside the community without remorse. To bet on eternity is just as vain as to bet on the present instant. From this comes the permanent sense of "non-authenticity." (1988, 13)

This is the subject position from which Transatlantic Central Europe can be written. On the one hand, the writer is unmoored from many of the familiar touchstones of identity (whether in internal or external emigration). On the other hand, "he finds legitimacy in language and literature." Through the attempts (the *essais*) to speak, the writer reemerges in a virtual space (in this case, a political-cultural journal), where he can converse and engage the reader at a safe remove.

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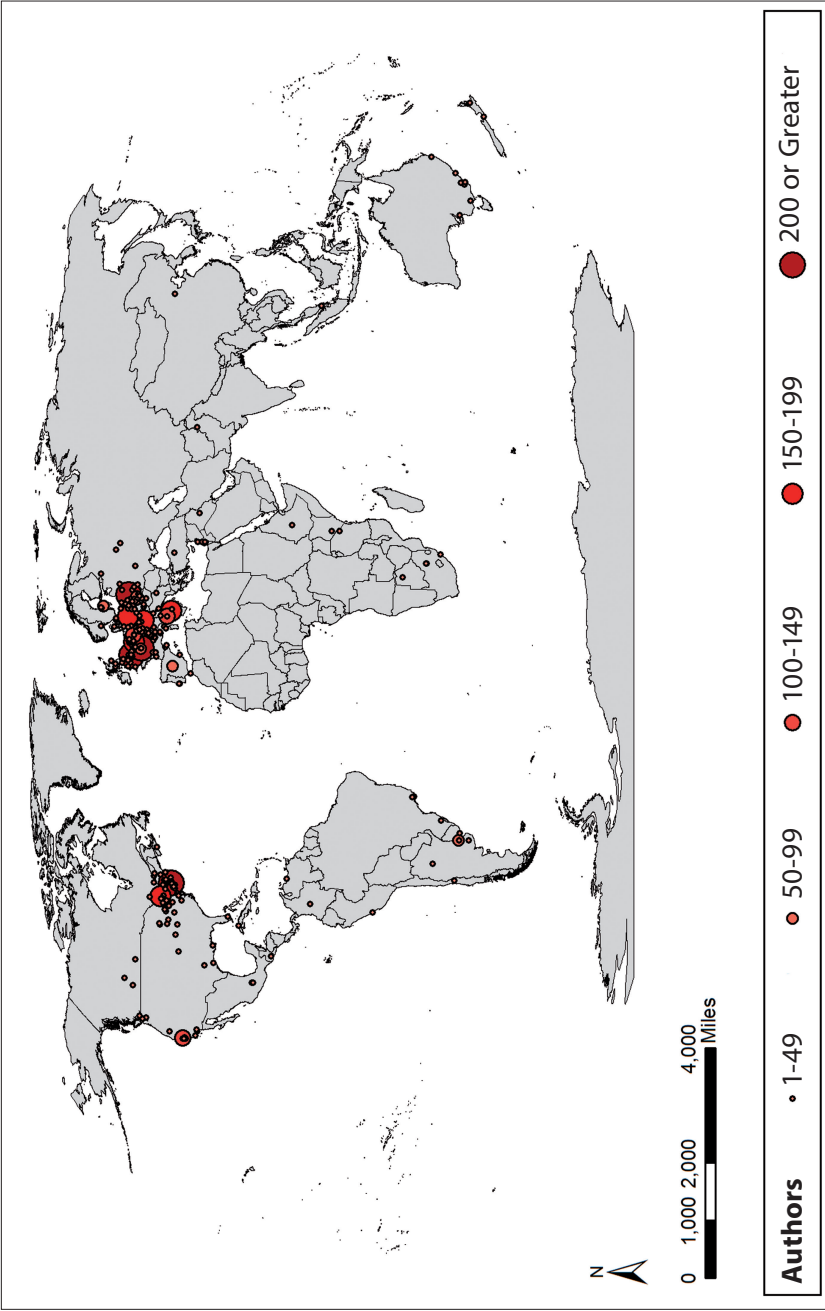
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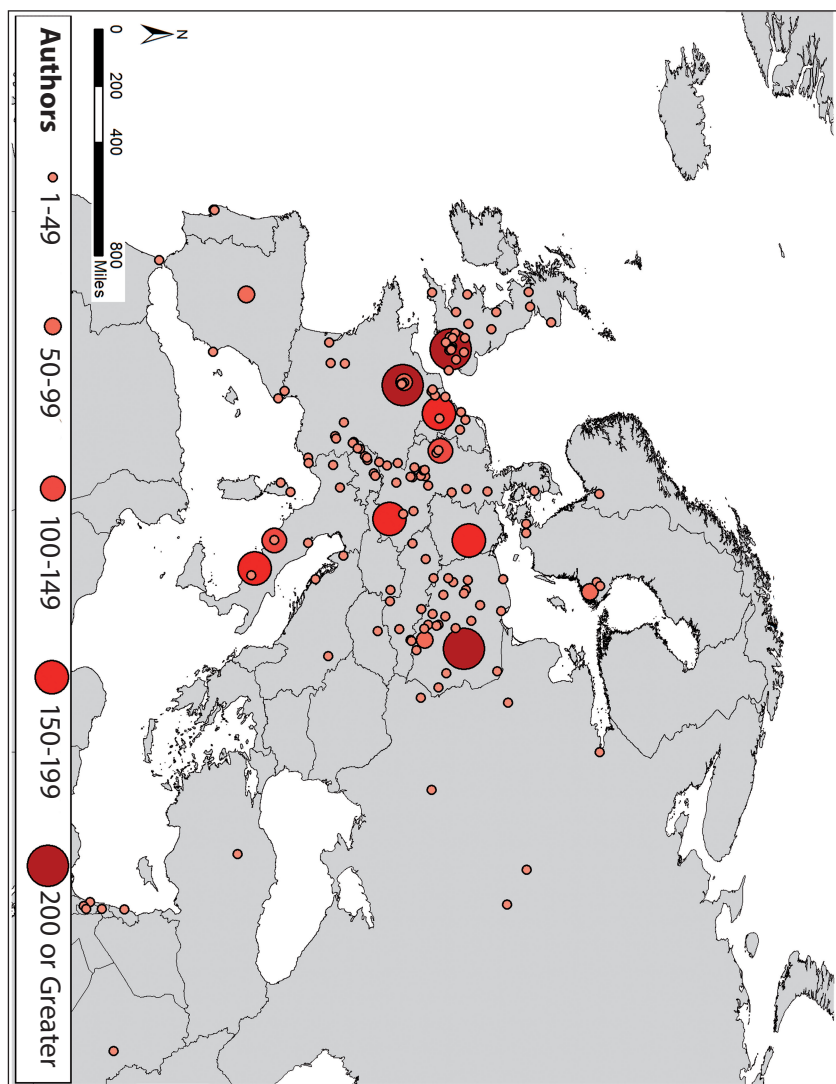
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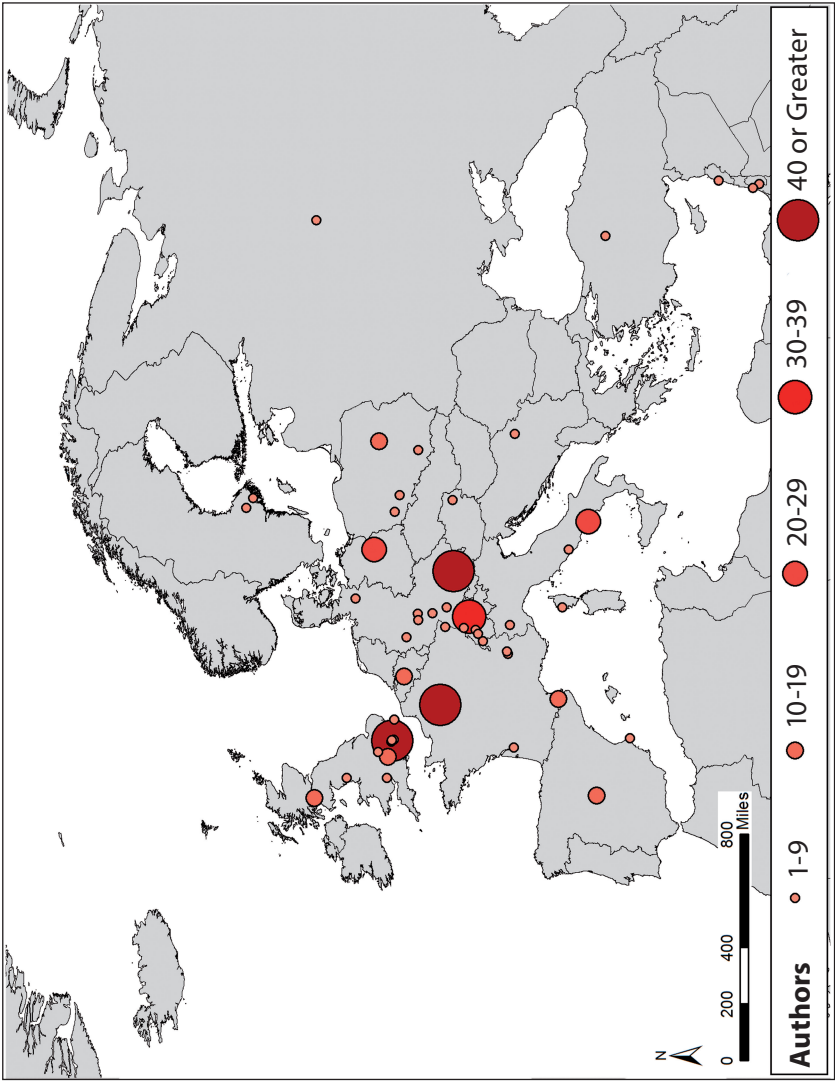
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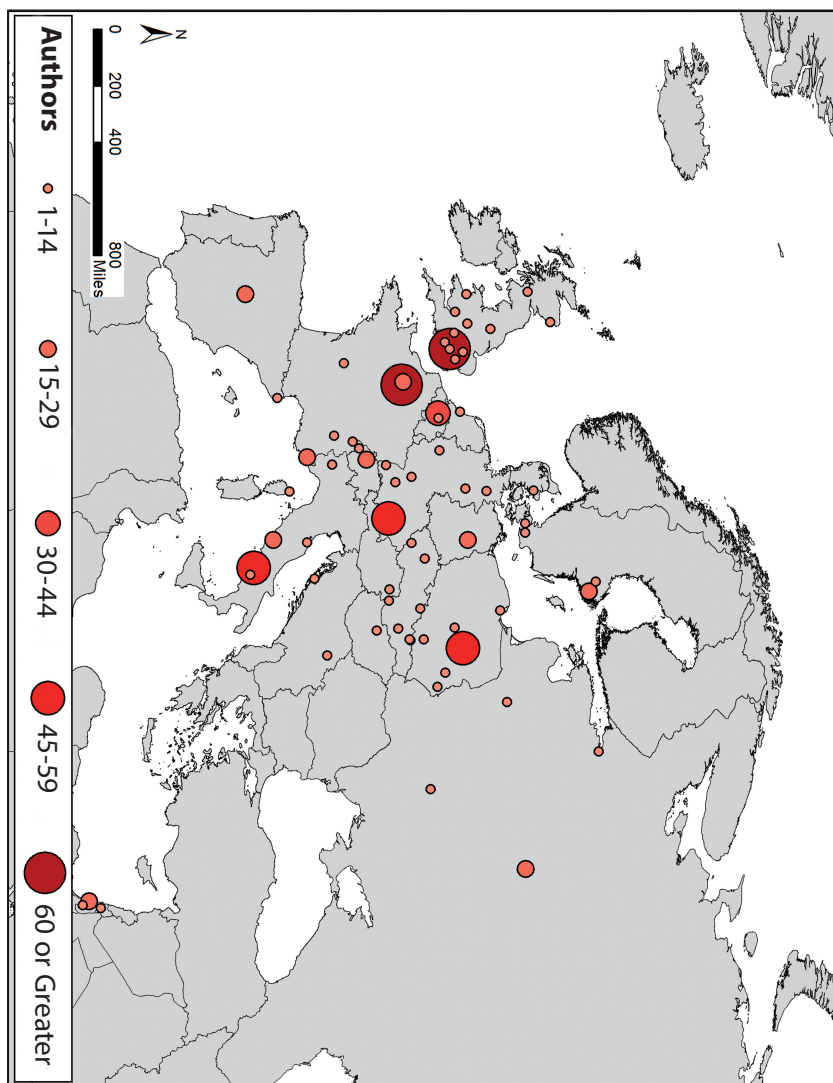
Map 1. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* authors by city (1947-1989)

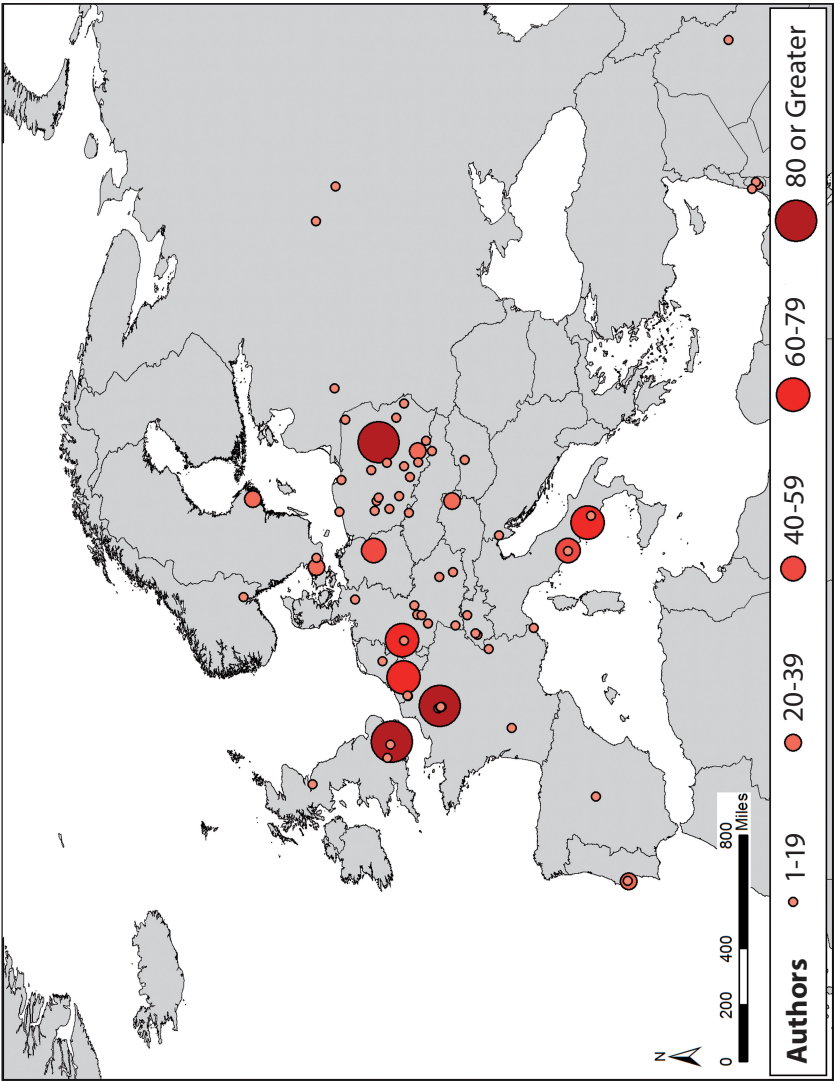


Map 2. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* authors by city—Europe (1947–1989)

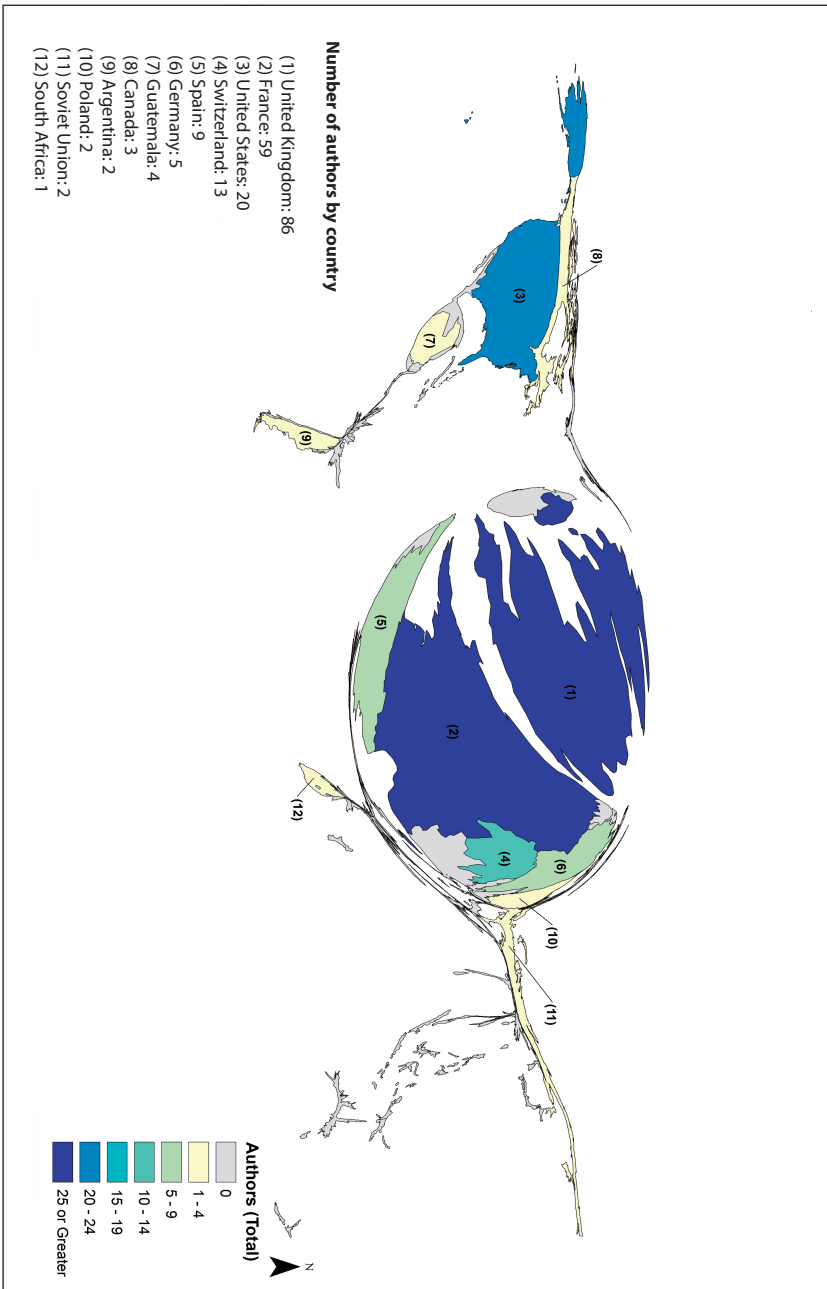


Map 3. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* authors by city—Europe
(1954–1963)

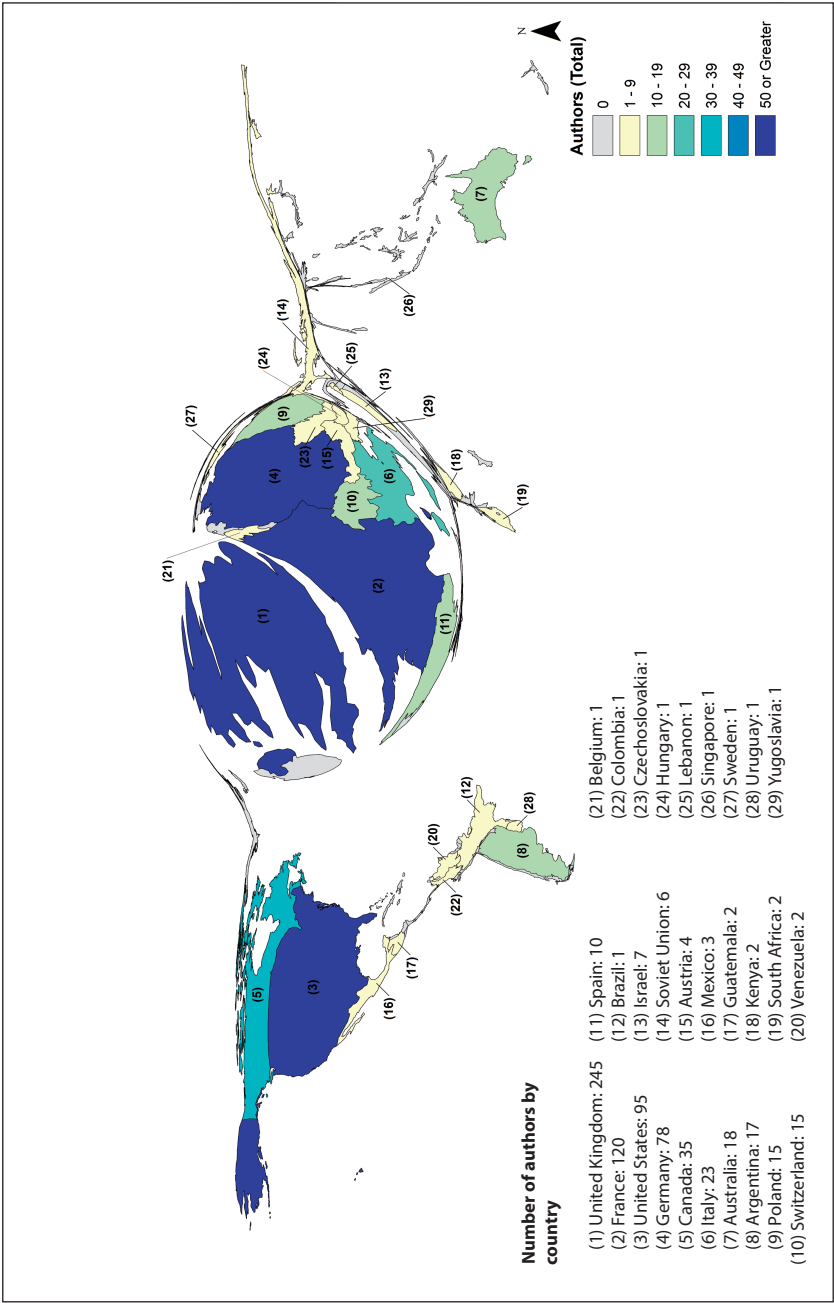




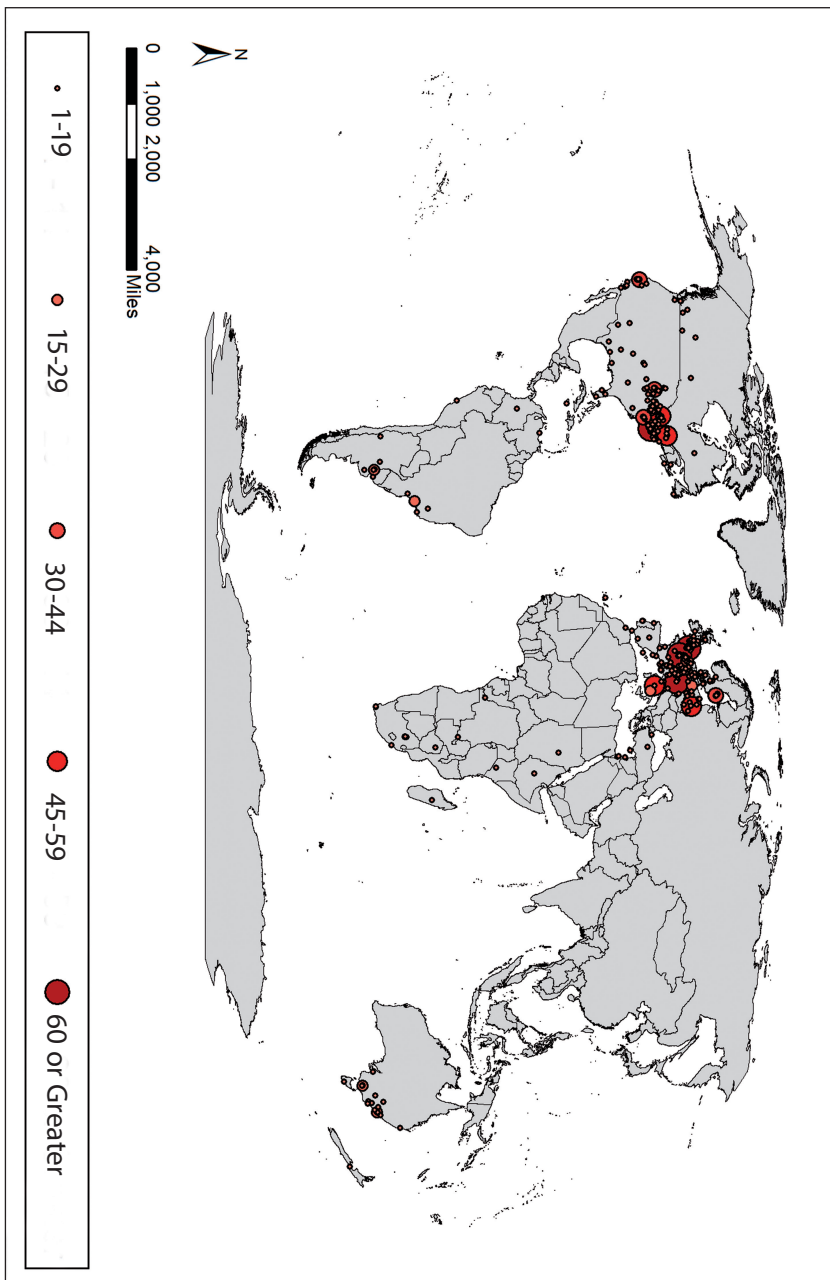
Map 5. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* authors by city—Europe (1982–1989)



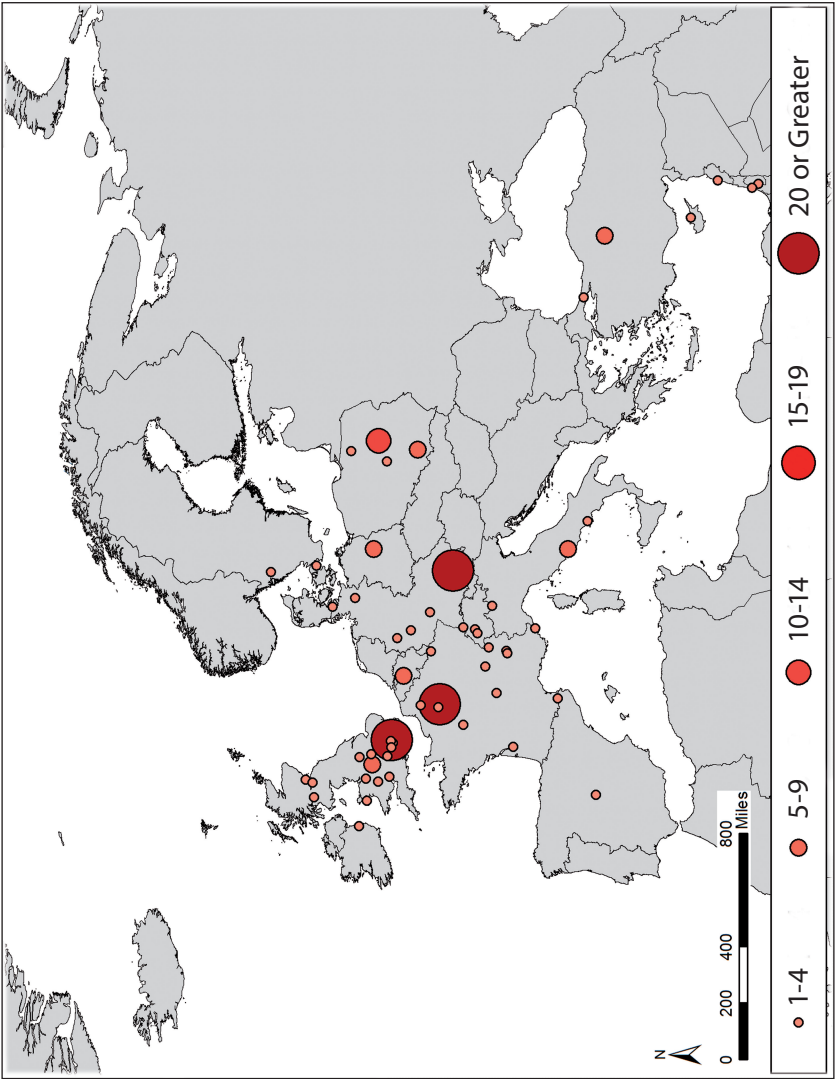
Map 6. Cartogram of *Kultura* authors by country
(1947-1949)



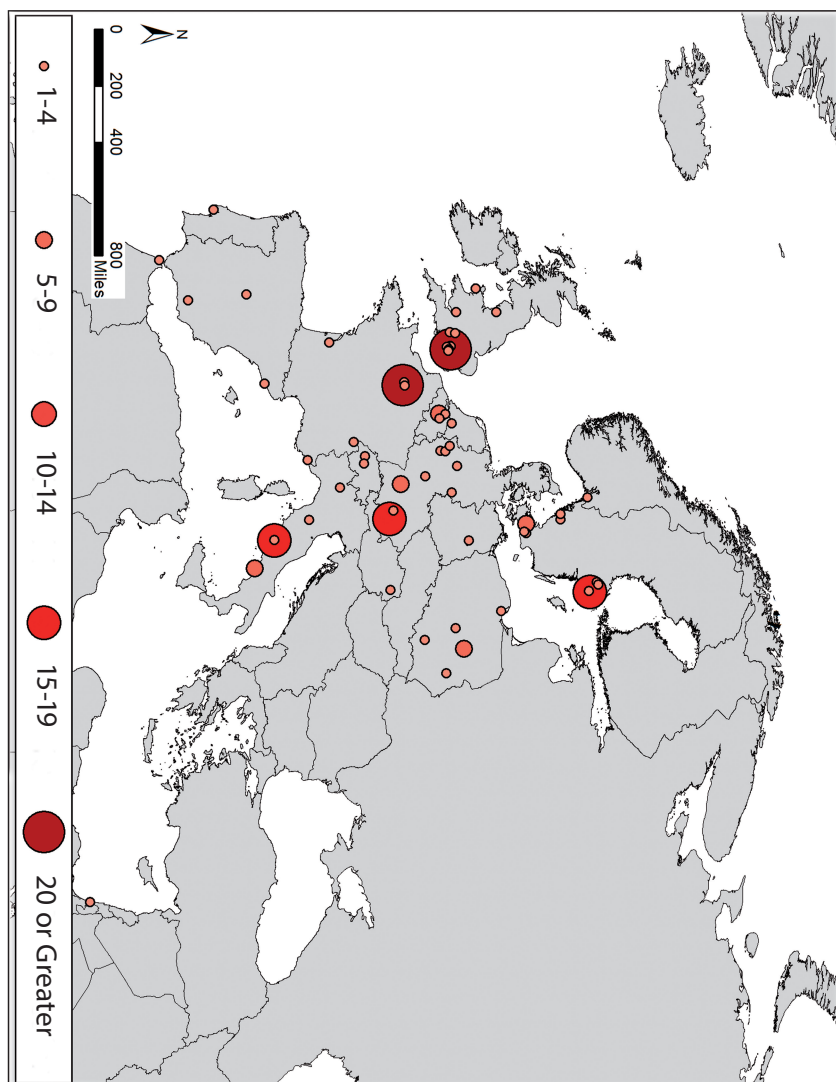
Map 7. Cartogram of *Kultura* authors by country
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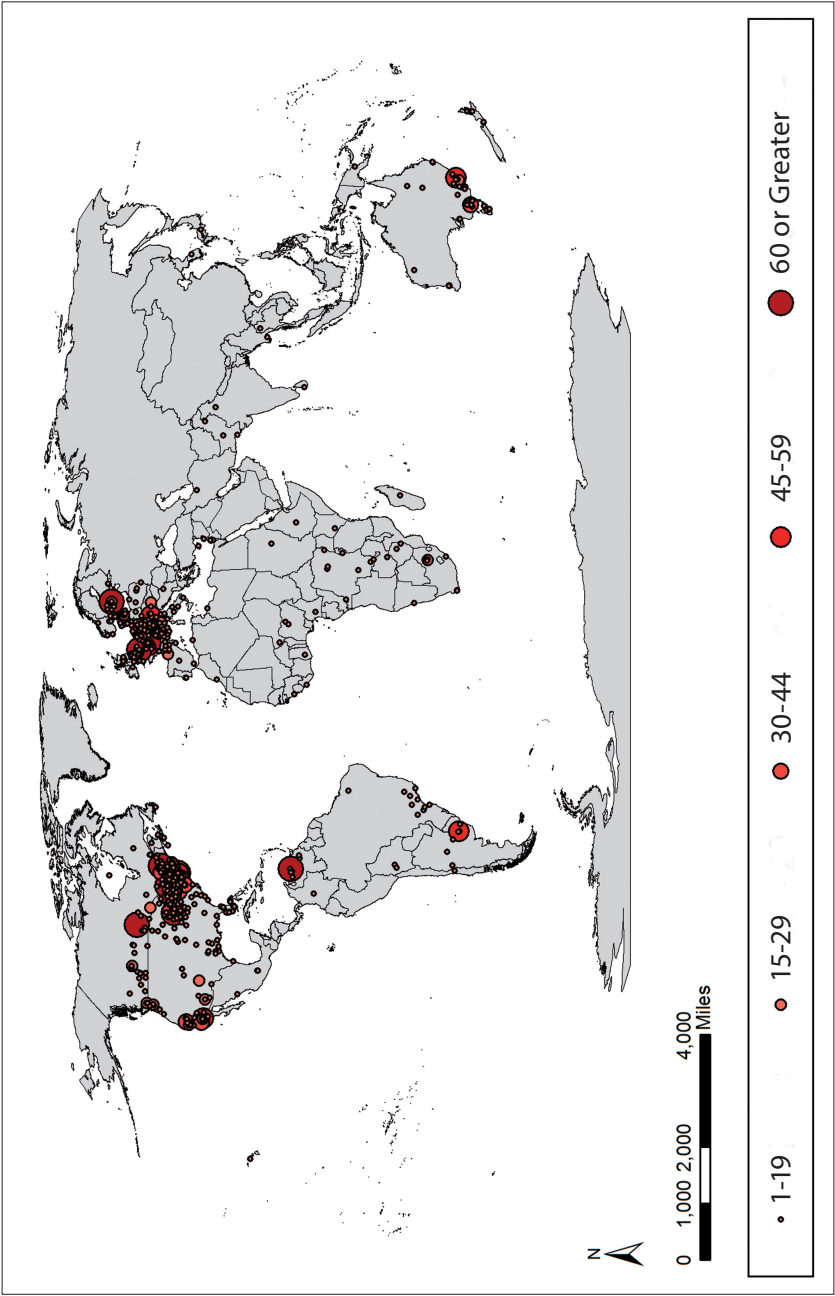
Map 8. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* letter writers by city
(1950–1989)



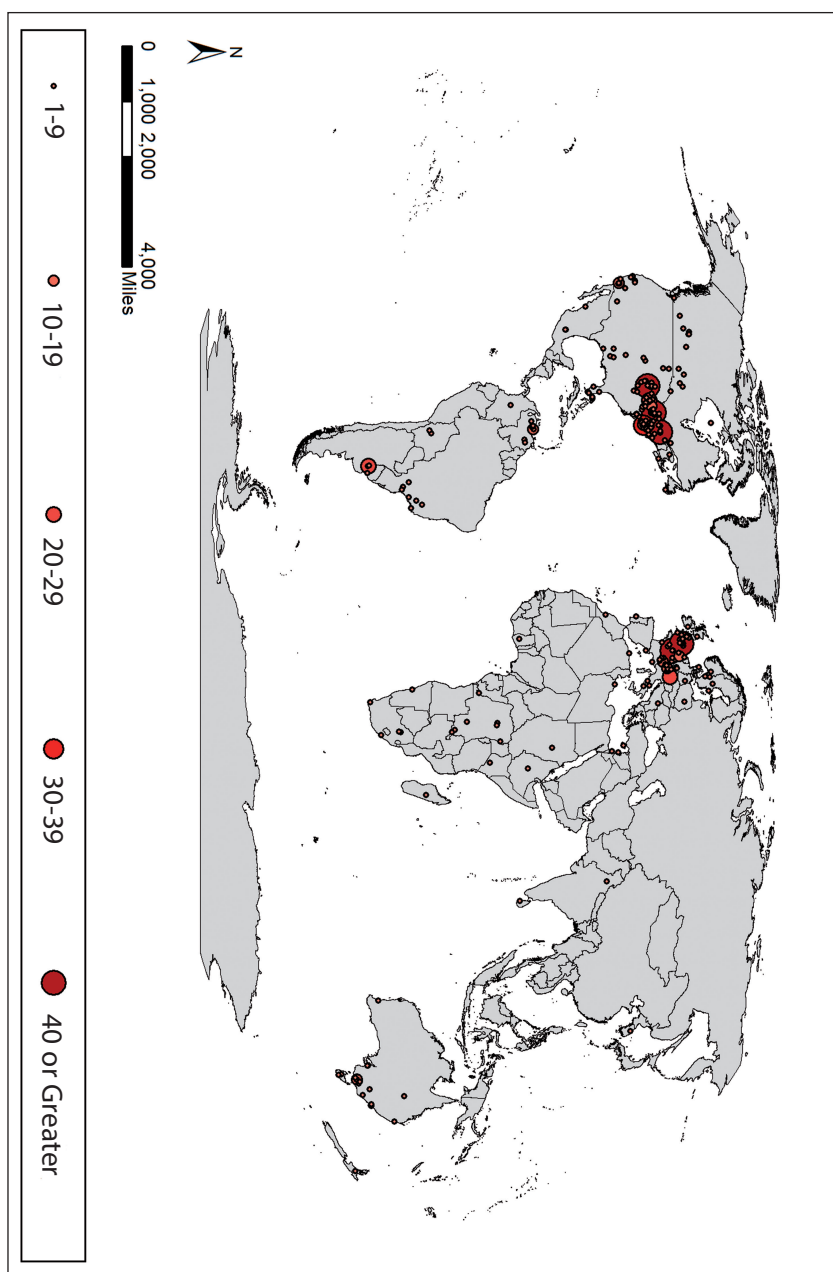
Map 9. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* letter writers by city—Europe (1974–1981)



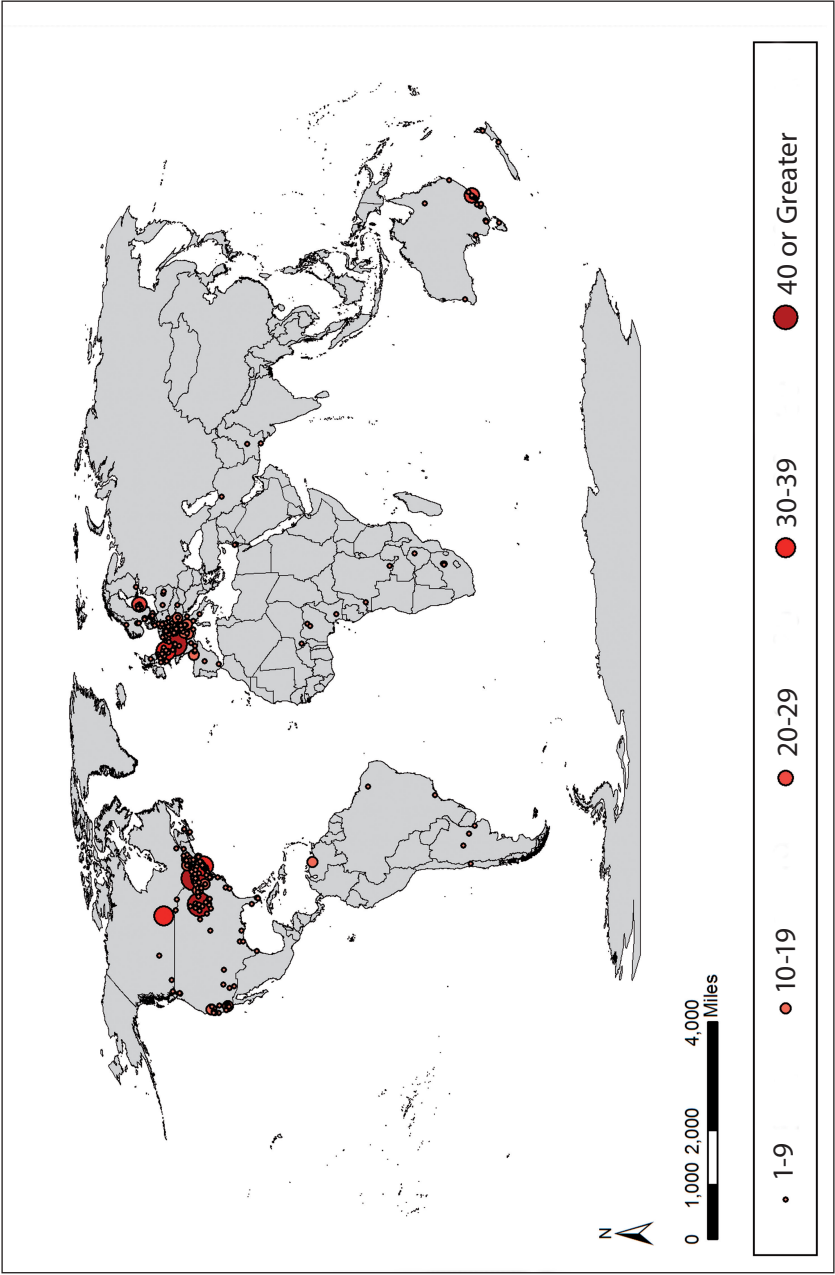
Map 10. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* letter writers by city—Europe (1947–1953)



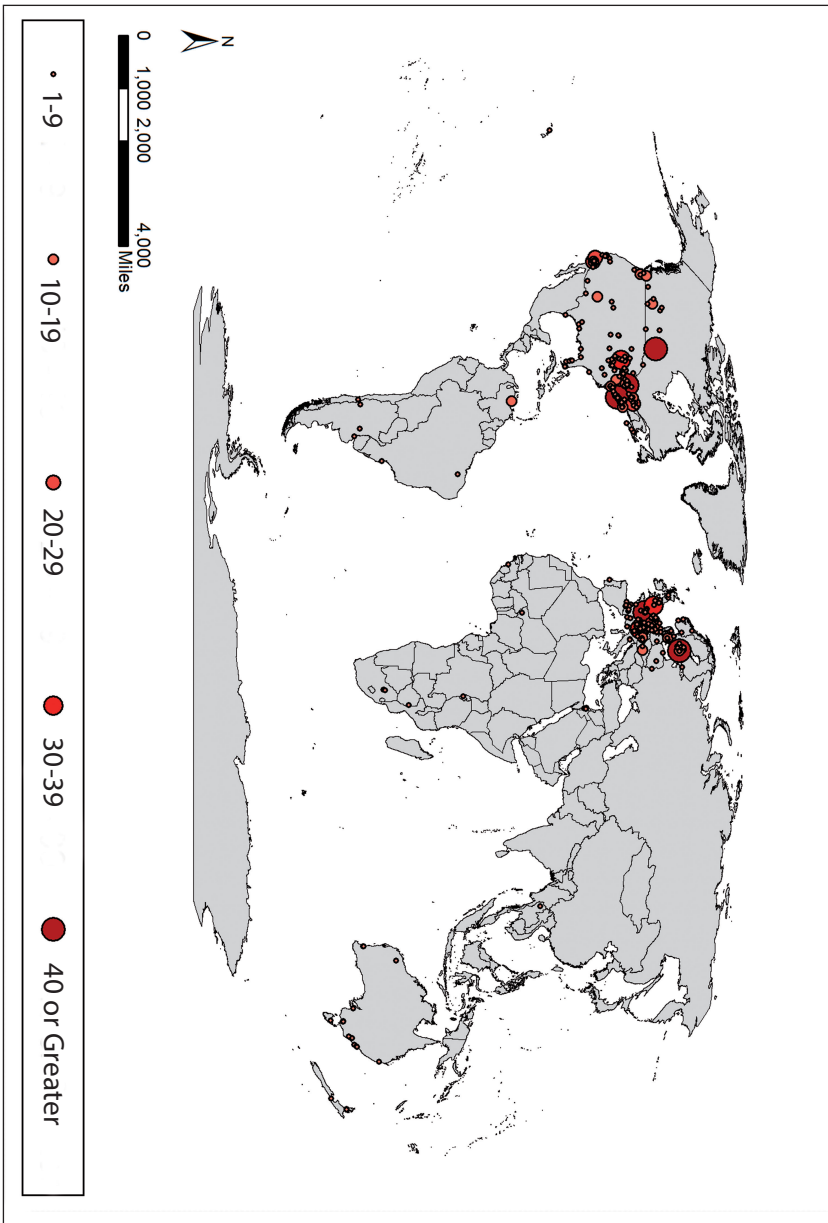
Map II. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* funders by city
(1954–1989)



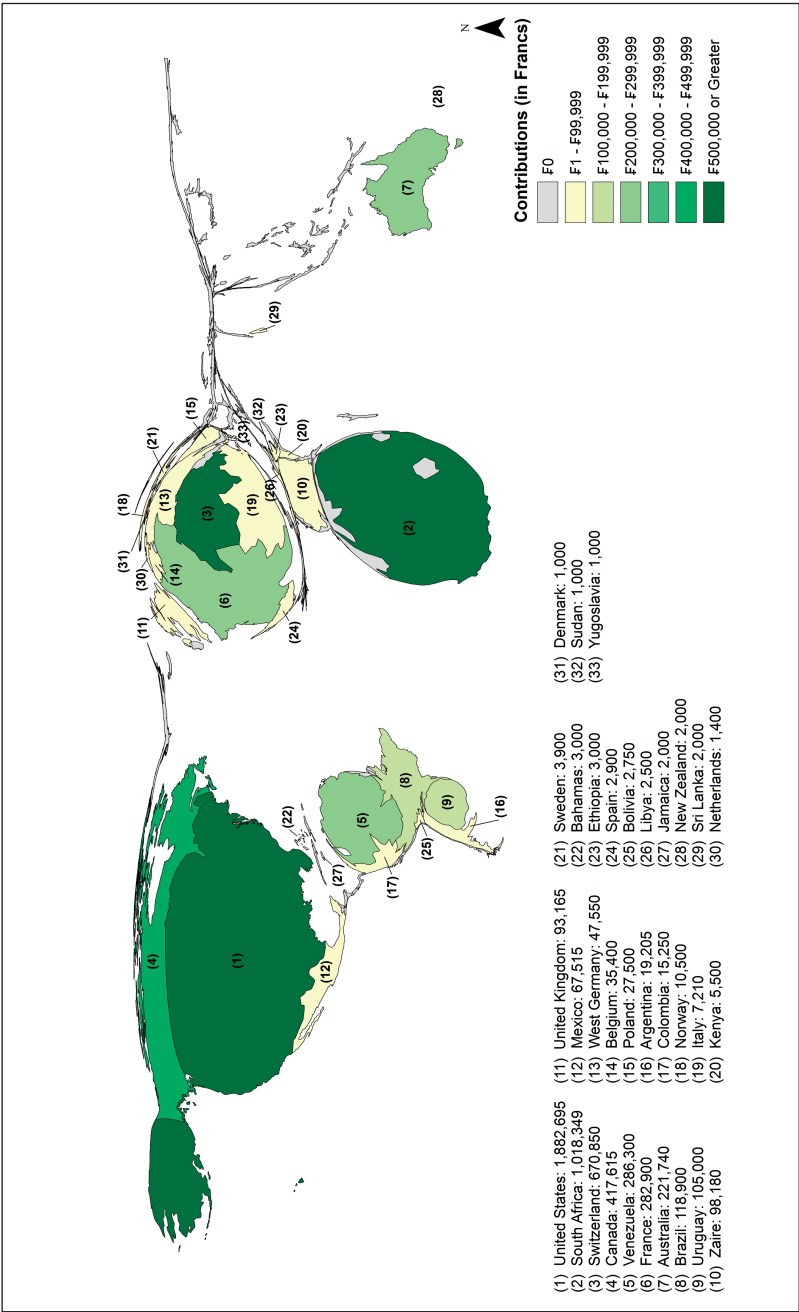
Map 12. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* funders by city (1954–1963)



Map 13. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* funders by city
(1974–1981)



Map 14. Graduated symbol map of *Kultura* funders by city
(1982–1989)



Map 15. Cartogram showing the proportional amount of funding by country
(1955–1959)



Map 16. Cartogram showing the proportional amount of funding by country (1975–1979)

This is an ambitious book, full of original and fascinating material on the institutional history of certain publications, key individuals, and disciplines. It features an innovative and compelling GIS-based study of the Polish émigré journal *Kultura*, which introduces digital humanities methodology to a subject area where it is not typically found. Labov's analysis of the postcolonial dimensions of the famous Lisbon conference of Central European and Russian writers brings theory into dialogue with geopolitical identities; she also convincingly argues that the fate of Yugoslavia was fundamental to the destruction of the idea of Central Europe for the generation of thinkers who championed it. *Transatlantic Central Europe* offers a unique mosaic of theoretical reflection, geopolitical intervention, and literary and cultural history.

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Labov combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies in innovative and illuminating ways to understand the concept of Central Europe through its diasporic extensions across the Atlantic. She traces the financing and political impact of important literary journals such as *Cross Currents*, whose contributors (including Czesław Miłosz, Milan Kundera, and Danilo Kiš) insisted on a common-sense approach to their “minor” cultures in the face of flattening totalitarianisms and postmodern obscurantism. In her most significant theoretical contribution, Labov rejects the “Orientalist” implications of “Balkanization” to advance a nuanced analysis of the relationship between “Central Europe” and Southeastern Europe driven by a careful reading of Kiš and Vladimir Dedijer. Drawing on a relational concept of culture, Labov questions the concept of a “nation” in a territory defined by its “in-between-ness.” Characteristic of this complex, cogent book, Labov's re-examination of the sad destiny of the dissident movement at large brings much needed insight to the region's post-socialist setting.

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